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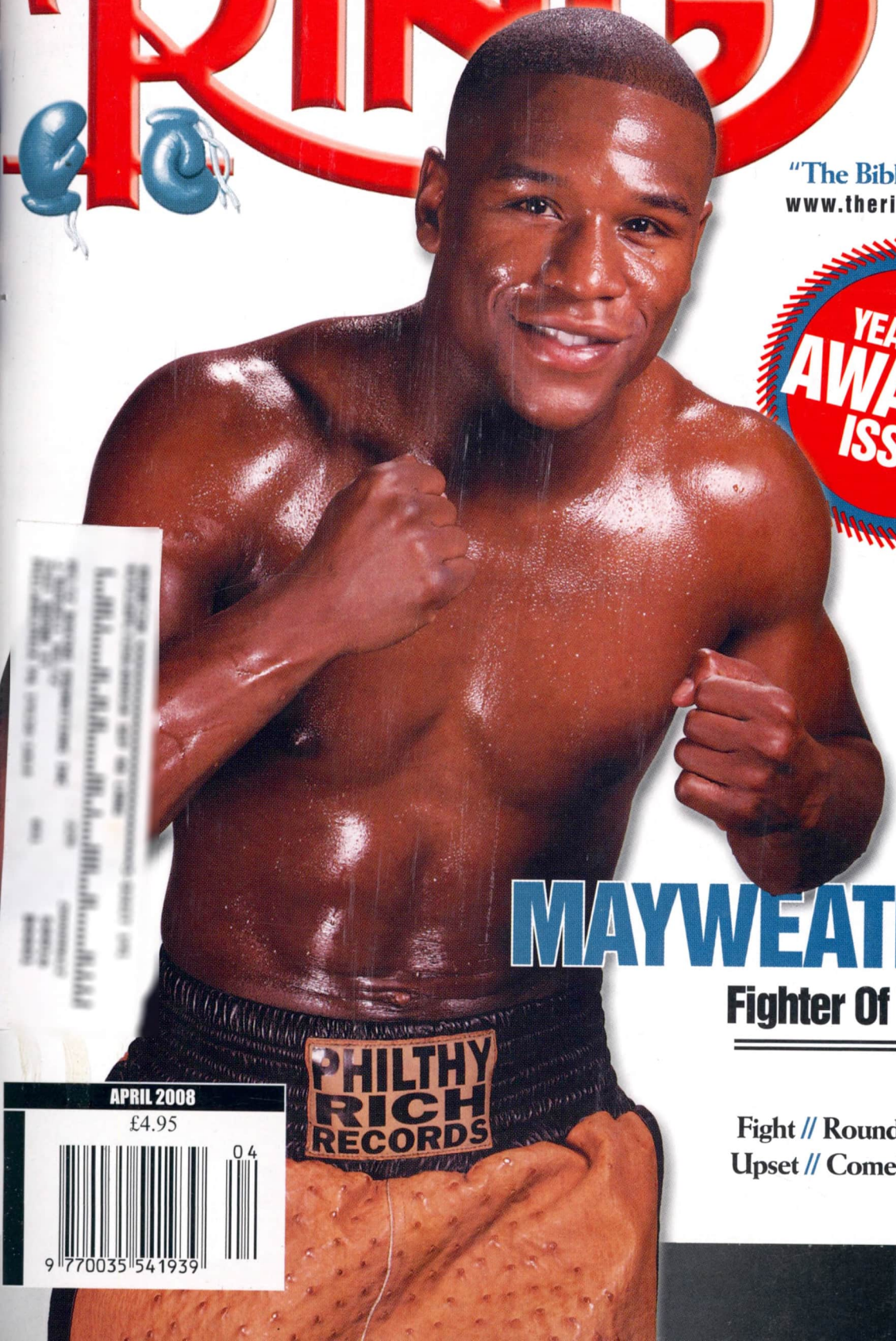

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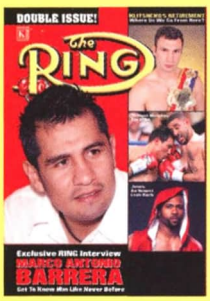

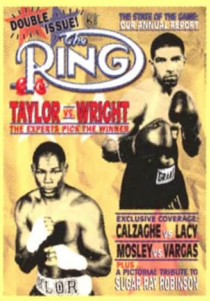

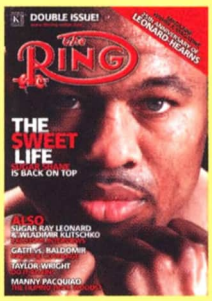

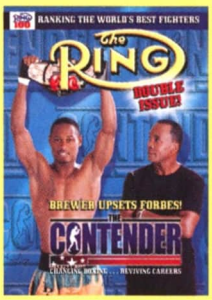

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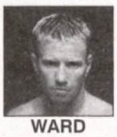

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Just In Case You Didn't Realize ...

We guess some people might have been so caught up in playing blackjack that they might not have known that there was also a fight taking place at the MGM Grand on December 8. We can't imagine Golden Boy Promotions was trying to sell tickets at this point; the fight had sold out 30 minutes after tickets went on sale. Maybe this added artwork was more about the casino trying to distract the gamblers. One thing is certain: Nobody except Mayweather left Las Vegas undefeated.

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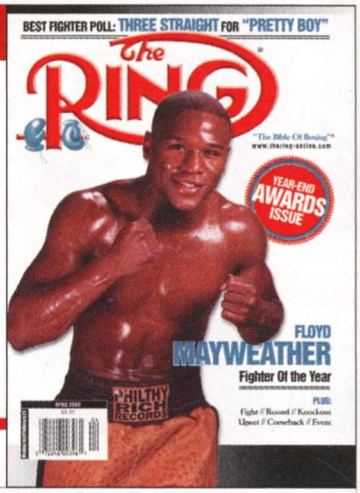

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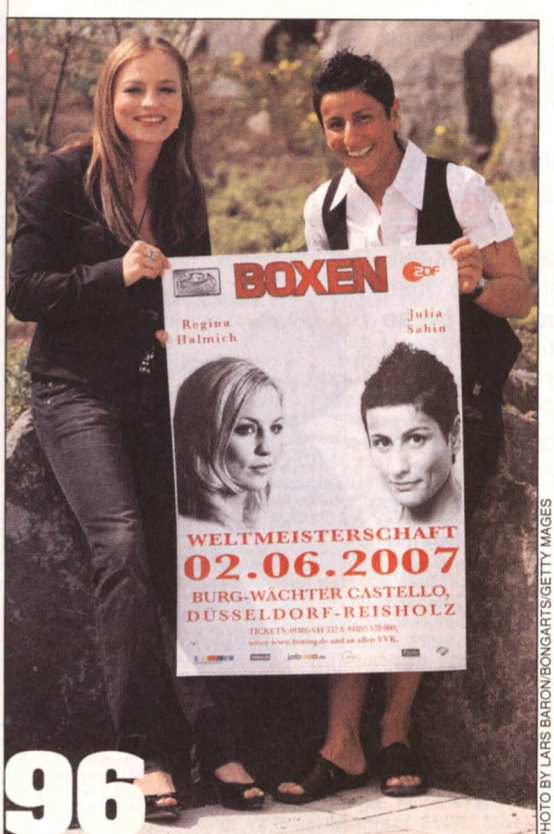

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Volume 87, No. 4 April 2008

The RING

Some final thoughts as 2007 draws to a close:

•If Floyd Mayweather is concerned about his "body breaking down," as he said on *24/7* during the lead-up to his fight with Ricky Hatton, he had better forget about trying mixed martial arts. Just because Floyd is a great boxer, it doesn't mean he'd automatically be great at MMA. Different disciplines require different skills and tax different parts of the body. Muhammad Ali found that out when he engaged wrestler Antonio Inoki in a so-called exhibition. Ali ended up with a pair of badly injured legs, the result of being repeatedly kicked, something not even Chuck Wepner, or Hatton for that matter, would dare attempt in a boxing match.

•Super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe is talking about retiring. It would be a shame to lose one of the game's very best now that he's developed into such a huge attraction, but you can't really blame him. Around the same time Joe was talking about hanging up his gloves, South Korean flyweight Yo-sam Choi was in a coma, the result of a head injury suffered in a bout with Heri Amol—a bout that Choi *won*!

•In boxing, as in life, you just never know how things are going to work out. A lot of folks were justifiably livid when lightweight champion Joel Casamayor was awarded a split decision victory over Jose Santa Cruz following their November title fight. Not only were they angry about the decision, some were upset that THE RING continued to recognize Casamayor as world champion, failing to understand that to ignore the official decision would have only compounded the problem.

Now, through a stroke of luck, Casamayor is scheduled to defend against popular slugger Michael Katsidis in March. Katsidis was going to challenge WBA/IBF titleholder Juan Diaz, but when Golden Boy Promotions won the purse bid, Diaz' promoter, Don King (who did not bid), killed the match. This left an opening into which Golden Boy inserted Casamayor.

Unlike the slick-boxing Santa Cruz, Katsidis is an action fighter who will force the aging Cuban to fight hard, which will either result in Casamayor looking much better than he did against Santa Cruz or a new world champion being crowned—maybe both. Hopefully, by then Diaz' contract with King will have run its course, and "The Baby Bull" can challenge the winner. And if King somehow convinces Diaz to stay with him, let Santa Cruz have the first shot at the Casamayor-Katsidis winner.

•British lightweight contender Amir Khan has a message for all those media outlets that refuse to recognize a bout as being for THE RING championship, even when the event is announced and advertised as such: "It's great to be recognized by the highly respected RING magazine and I'm looking to climb their ratings with each performance and eventually get one of those great RING belts that Joe Calzaghe and Ricky Hatton have."

•In conclusion, a clarification and a correction: Astute readers will notice that while Floyd Mayweather is designated Fighter of the Month in our "Ringside Reports" section, Enrique Ornelas was awarded that distinction in the December segment of "The Year In Review." That is because the editors select the official Fighter of the Month, while Senior Writer William Dettloff chose the winners in his month-by-month recap of 2007. As both fighters put on such marvelous performances, we decided to allow them to share the spotlight.

Finally, the 300,000 buys for the Ricardo Mayorga-Fernando Vargas pay-per-view reported in the March issue was wrong. The fight did about half of that figure.

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Fall 2000: 10 Reasons Mike Tyson Can Beat Lennox Lewis. Plus: Arturo Gatti, Felix Trinidad, Mike Griffith. [All-color beginning with the March 2001 issue]

March 2001: The Ultimate Boxing Ratings. Plus: Tyson-Golota, Marco Antonio Barrera, Joel Cassamayor.

Nov. 2001: It's Time To Flex Your Muscles, Roy: Fight The Trinidad-Hopkins Winner Next! Plus: Laila-Jacqui, Floyd Mayweather, greatest upsets.

July 2002: Jones vs. Hopkins: What Will Happen When The Trash Talk Stops. Plus: Forrest-Mosley, Arturo Gatti, Wayne McCullough, De La Hoya-Vargas preview, great junior middleweight moments.

Nov. 2002: Lennox Lewis—Is He The Best Heavyweight Since Muhammad Ali? Plus: Naseem Hamed, Kostya Tszyu, Diobelys Hurtado, Rocky Juarez, 10 fights that transcended boxing.

Feb. 2003: Can Anyone Wipe The Smile Off Oscar's Face? Plus: Lennox Lewis, Eric Lucas, Jesse James Leija, Shane Mosley, 10 all-time most exciting fighters.

June 2003: Lennox's Legacy On The Line: Will He Be Toppled In '03? Plus: Fernando Vargas, Arturo Gatti, 2002 in review.

Oct. 2003: Hall Call: Today's Best Fighters—Who's Headed To Canastota? Plus: Hasim Rahman, Mayweather-De La Hoya, Miguel Barrera, Winky Wright, Roy Jones, heavyweight flops.

Jan. 2004: Fernando Vargas: The Latino Gatti. Plus: Lennox Lewis, Manny Pacquiao, Acelino Freitas, Elvir Muriqi, Marco Antonio Barrera, boxing's blue-chippers.

May 2004: Vitali Klitschko: Another Step Toward "World Domination." Plus: Shane Mosley, junior middle report card, when losers win, 2003 in review.

Sept. 2004: Hopkins vs. De La Hoya: What Is Oscar Thinking? Plus: Wright-Mosley, Corrales-Casamayor, Glen Johnson, Felix Sturm, Lennox Lewis, 2004 Hall of Fame, lightweight report card.

Dec. 2004: What's Next? Has Mike Tyson Run Out Of Options? Plus: Gatti & Leija, Kermit Cintron, Floyd Mayweather, British boxing slump, ultimate ratings, featherweight report card.

April 2005: Tszyu Erases Mitchell ... And All Doubts. Plus: Roy Jones, Judah-Spinks preview, Travis Simms, Carl Thompson, Bernard Hopkins, old age.

Dec. 2005: Corrales vs. Castillo: Can The Rematch Measure Up To The Original? Plus: Floyd Mayweather, Taylor-Hopkins, Kevin McBride, Zab Judah, great rematch fighters, middleweight report card.

Summer 2006: Pac-Man To The Rescue! Can A 130-Pound Filipino Carry Boxing On His Back? Plus: Oscar De La Hoya, Arturo Gatti, O'Neil Bell, Martin Castillo, Mikkel Kessler, 10 greatest junior light fights, cruiserweight report card.

Winter 2006: Morales vs. Pacquiao: If You Think You Know Who's Gonna Win ... Think Again! Plus: Vargas & Gatti, Angelo Dundee, Carl Froch, second-generation fighters, fighting past 40, 20 greatest Puerto Ricans.

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Who Will Stay & Who Will Go?

Some years, we do damned well with these annual predictions of which RING champs will remain RING champs for the next 12 months. 2007 was not one of those years.

Of the nine men who ended '06 as champs, we were correct about only 2½ of them. We got Joe Calzaghe staying correct. We got Joel Casamayor staying correct (thank you to the atrocious judging for bailing us out on that one). And we were half right about Israel Vazquez. We said his junior featherweight reign would end, and it did against Rafael Marquez ... but then he recaptured the title from Marquez in the rematch. You could argue it qualifies as a "Stay." You could argue it qualifies as a "Go." We think half-credit seems fair.

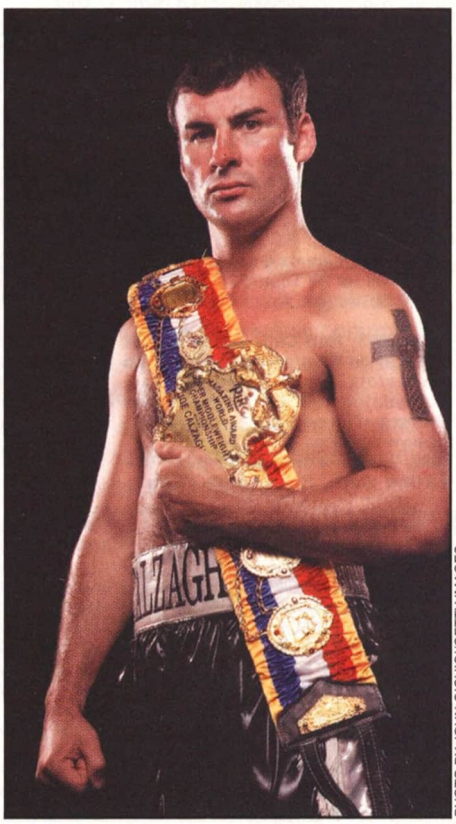


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Will Calzaghe still be super middle champ this time next year?

Still, there were six out of nine that we got completely wrong. The good news is, we're almost sure to improve on that number this year. So here goes with our best guesses as to which titles will change hands in '08 and which won't:

David Haye (cruiserweight): Before he knocked out Jean-Marc Mormeck to become champ, Haye insisted that, win or lose, making 200 pounds was too difficult and he'd be moving up to heavyweight immediately. After the fight, however, he indicated to THE RING that the magazine's title means a lot to him and he'd like to make a defense of it. In the end, though, it figures to come down to money, and against whom can he make major dollars at cruiser right now? **Prognosis: Go**

Bernard Hopkins (light heavyweight): If all of their nose-to-nose jawing is any indication, Hopkins and Joe Calzaghe will be getting together sometime in the first half of '08, with "The Executioner's" 175-pound championship at stake. Hard as it is to count the old man out, Calzaghe sure seems like a nightmare style for him, as it's tough to beat a guy who'll triple your punch output unless you have that one-punch equalizer. In B-Hop's prime, it might be a different story, but unfortunately, only one of these future Hall of Famers is in his prime. **Prognosis: Go**

Joe Calzaghe (super middleweight): THE RING has no rule against holding championships in two divisions at once, so theoretically Calzaghe could take Hopkins' title and remain super middle king. But the truth is, Calzaghe has nothing more to prove at 168. He'll renounce this title by the time the Hopkins fight is finalized, and if by chance he and Hopkins can't complete negotiations, he'll probably still move up to light heavy to face Clinton Woods. **Prognosis: Go**

Kelly Pavlik (middleweight): This is close to a no-brainer, since the champ's February rematch with Jermain Taylor is an over-the-weight non-title affair, and his next bout will probably come against John Duddy, about a 10-1 underdog. It would take a Rahman-Lewis-level upset to prevent Pavlik from entering '09 as the middleweight king. **Prognosis: Stay**

Floyd Mayweather (welterweight): "Pretty Boy" says he's leaning toward taking 2008 off from boxing, which begs two questions: Does he mean it? And if he does mean it, is he going to vacate the welterweight title? Tough questions to answer, but we know this much: If he does defend in '08, it's going to be hard to

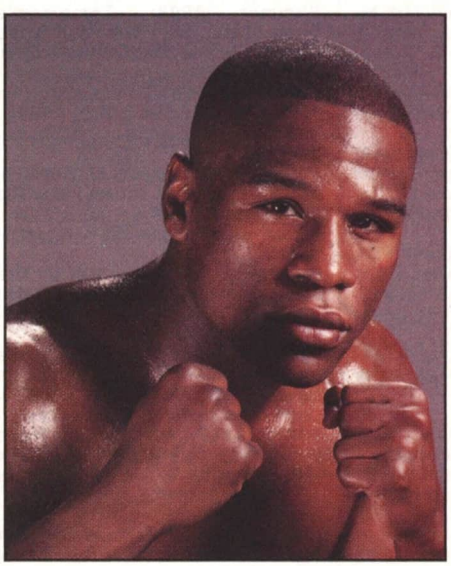


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Will Mayweather take a year's vacation from boxing?

get away with picking any opponent other than Miguel Cotto. And that's a fight Mayweather could definitely lose. So one way or another, either by Cotto or by no-go, we're predicting Mayweather doesn't have this title at year's end. **Prognosis: Go**

Ricky Hatton (junior welterweight): Clearly, "The Hitman" is not a welterweight. But getting stretched by the pound-for-pound king doesn't diminish his standing as the top 140-pounder in the world. The toughest fight out there for Hatton is Junior Witter, but if he's ducked that fight this long, he can duck it another year. We like Hatton to beat guys like Paul Malignaggi or Gavin Rees or Ricardo Torres, so we like him to keep that loss column stuck on "1" through the next 12 months. **Prognosis: Stay**

Joel Casamayor (lightweight): This reign should have ended on November 10 when Casamayor got nothing done against Jose Armando Santa Cruz for 12 rounds, but the judges kept the reign alive. No judges, however, can do anything about the fact that Casamayor is 36 years old and washed-up. **Prognosis: Go**

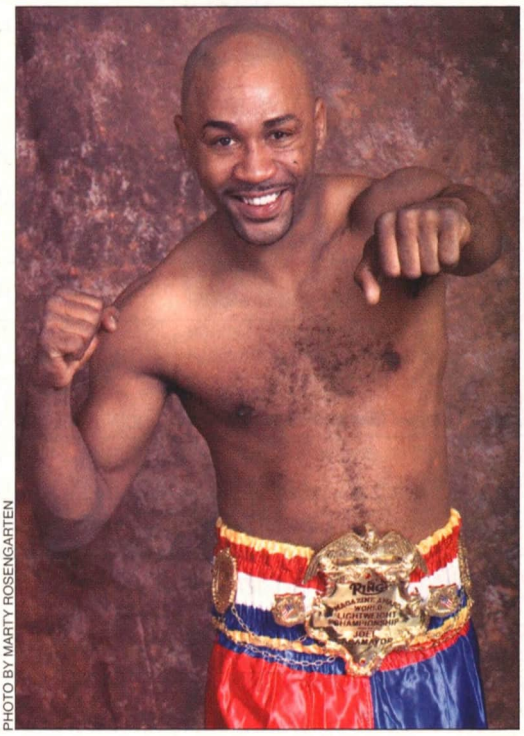


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Can Casamayor possibly survive '08?

Israel Vazquez (junior featherweight): You never know with a give-one-to-take-one bleeder like Vazquez; he's the sort of fighter who might be able to beat Wilfredo Gomez on the right night, and might lose to a fringe contender on the wrong night. But we like him to beat Rafael Marquez in March, and while he could hit the wall at any time, something tells us that time isn't coming just yet. **Prognosis: Stay**

Ivan Calderon (junior flyweight): "Iron Boy" turned 33 on January 7, which isn't young for a junior fly, and the close calls are adding up, with two split decisions among his last three fights. At 108 pounds, it's getting tough to hold opponents off, even unknowns like Juan Esquer. There are very few better boxers in the world than this Puerto Rican southpaw. But even the best boxers have to lose their "0" eventually. **Prognosis: Go**

—Eric Raskin

Hank Kaplan, 1919-2007

Boxing lost a great friend and its foremost historian when Hank Kaplan, 88, died of cancer on December 14, at his home in Kendall, Florida.

Kaplan was born in Brooklyn, New York, and raised in an orphanage. He moved to Florida in the early-1950s, where he worked as a quarantine officer with the Center of Disease Control for 30 years.

PHOTO BY JEFF JULIAN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Rest in peace, Hank

Kaplan was a boxing fan from an early age, and after one professional fight, which he won, he dedicated himself to amassing what eventually became one of the largest boxing archives in the world. Prior to his death, Kaplan made arrangements for his priceless collection of books, photographs, and memorabilia to be transferred to New York's Brooklyn College.

Over the decades, Kaplan worked as a publicist for Chris and Angelo Dundee, wrote and edited books and magazines, promoted fights, and shared his vast knowledge with generations of journalists, filmmakers, and fans. He also served on the International Boxing Hall of Fame screening committee, and was himself inducted into the IBHOF in 2006.

Kaplan also became something of a guardian angel for retired champions and accompanied Beau Jack and Kid Gavilan to many functions during the latter part of their lives.

Despite his many accomplishments, for those lucky enough to have known him, Kaplan will be remembered as much for his kindness and generous nature as he will be for his huge contribution to the Sweet Science.

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
11/30/07	Alfredo Angulo KO 1 Archak TerMeliksetian	Showtime	jm	C+	C	C+
	Mexican Olympian turns the Shark into bait					
11/30/07	James Kirkland KO 1 Allen Conyers	Showtime	jm	C+	C	B+
	When both men are knocked down, it only matters who gets up					
11/30/07	Roberto Garcia NC 3 Freddy Hernandez	Telefutura	w	B-	B	C+
	The kindest cut; Hernandez saved from loss by his own blood					
11/30/07	Yori Boy Campas KO 5 Fernando Vela	Telefutura	m	F	F	D
	100-fight veteran allowed to fight foe with fewer than 10 wins					
12/01/07	Mike Alvarado KO 1 Michael Clark	PPV	jw	C	C	D
	Contender *series vets rarely win against non-ESPN foes*					
12/01/07	Jorge Arce KO 1 Medgoen Singsurat	PPV	b	B+	C+	B-
	Hot-and-cold Arce was En Fuego					
12/01/07	Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 6 Ray Sanchez	PPV	jm	C+	B	B
	Junior already worthy of PPV?					
12/01/07	**Ivan Calderon W 12 Juan Esquer**	**PPV**	**jf**	**A**	**C**	**B-**
	"Iron Boy"most frustrating boxer to fight not named Mayweather					
12/01/07	Nonito Donaire KO 8 Luis Maldonado	Showtime	fl	A-	B+	B-
	Looks like the Darchinyan kayo was no fluke					
12/01/07	Vernon Forrest KO 11 Michele Piccirillo	Showtime	jm	B	C	B-
	Mid-career crisis seems behind Forrest					
12/01/07	Antonio Tarver KO 4 Danny Santiago	Showtime	lh	B	C-	C
	Tarver talks a big game in 2007 without facing any big game					
12/06/07	Sergio Martinez KO 4 Russell Jordan	Versus	jm	C+	C	B-
	Martinez most exciting Argentine import since Manu Ginobili?					
12/06/07	Monte Barrett KO 2 Cliff Couser	Versus	h	C-	C	C
	Career is near end if you must avenge a kayo loss to Couser					
12/06/07	Yuri Foreman W 10 Andrey Tsurkan	Versus	jm	B-	B	B+
	This is what ethnic matches in 1930s NYC must have been like					
12/07/07	John Murray W 10 Miguel Munguia	Telefutura	l	C	C	C
	A England vs. Mexico soccer match would bring more passion					
12/07/07	Enrique Ornelas KO 5 Bronco McKart	Telefutura	m	B	B	A-
	A rematch worthy of a rubber match					
12/07/07	Edner Cherry KO 6 Wes Ferguson	PPV	l	C+	C-	C
	Who wanted to see this rematch, much less pay for it?					
12/07/07	Jeff Lacy W 10 Peter Manfredo	PPV	sm	B	B-	C+
	Lacy slightly superior in clash of Calzaghe victims					
12/07/07	Daniel Ponce De Leon W 12 Eduardo Escobedo	PPV	jf	B	C+	C
	Did Escobedo take a forward step after the opening bell?					
12/07/07	**Floyd Mayweather Jr. KO 10 Ricky Hatton**	**PPV**	**w**	**A+**	**A**	**B+**
	Mayweather tops big year with kayo					
12/14/07	Miguel Huerta KO 3 Daniel Alicea	Telefutura	l	C+	C+	B-
	Huerta is a menace when allowed to plod forward					
12/14/07	Orlando Salido KO 6 Hector Avila	Telefutura	f	C+	C	C+
	Salido serves up a delicious three-punch combo kayo					
12/15/07	Naoki Matsuda NC 8 Rodolfo Lopez	PPV	f	B	B	D
	Weird WBC cut rule results in no-contest					
12/15/07	Jorge Linares KO 8 Gamaliel Diaz	PPV	f	A-	C	C+
	Could Linares be this generation's Alexis Arguello?					
12/15/07	Edwin Valero KO 3 Zaid Zavaleta	PPV	jl	A-	C	C+
	American borders are the only thing stopping this kayo machine					

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

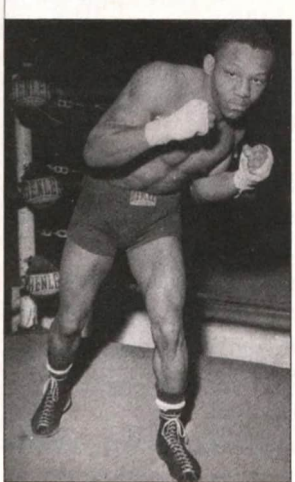
Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

Holmes, Perkins Top IBHOF Class Of 2008

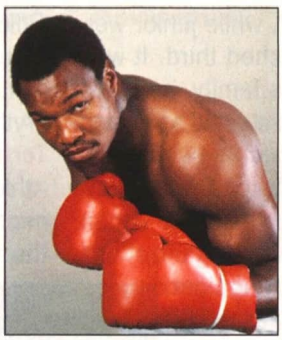
The latest roster of inductees into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York, includes one no-brainer in former heavyweight champion Larry Holmes and one long-overdue selection in former junior welterweight champion Eddie Perkins, both of whom will be enshrined during Induction Weekend (June 6 through June 8).

Holmes, 68-6 (44), turned pro on March 1973, and captured the WBC heavyweight title in June '78 with a 15-round spilt decision over Ken Norton in a classic confrontation. After seven successful defenses, "The Easton Assassin" gained worldwide recognition by stopping comebacking Muhammad Ali in 1980. Following 12 additional title defenses, Holmes lost the title to Michael Spink in '85, but continued to fight until July '02, when he won a 10-round decision over Eric "Butterbean" Esch in his final bout. A master craftsman, Holmes was also a genuine tough guy, who was only stopped once in his 74-bout career.

Unable to obtain lucrative matches in the United States, the slick boxing Perkins, 74-20-3 (20) with 1 no-contest, was forced to traverse the globe in order to earn a living, and fought more than half of his bouts overseas, losing many controversial decisions to hometown heroes in the process. Perkins turned pro on December 27, 1956. He won the junior welterweight title on September 14, 1962, with a 15-round decision over Duilio Loi in Milan, Italy, but lost the belt in a rematch. The Chicago-based technician rebounded to win the then-vacant 140-pound title the next year, and made two defenses before losing the title to Carlos Hernandez in '65. He continued to campaign successfully until May '75, but never won another title.



Long overdue honor for Perkins



Holmes makes it to the Hall of Fame his first year of eligibility

Joining Holmes and Perkins in the Modern Category is Florida-born middleweight Holman Williams, 146-30-11 (36), who fought from 1932 until 1948. Williams beat such outstanding fighters as Archie Moore, Charley Burley, and Lloyd Marshall, but never got a title shot.

Voted into the Old-Timers Category are Len Harvey, 111-13-9 (51), who held the British middleweight, light heavyweight, and heavyweight titles during a lengthy career that started in 1920 and lasted until 1942; American Frank Klaus, 50-26-1(26) with 32 no-decisions, who won and lost the middleweight title in 1913; and turn-of-the century welterweight title claimant Harry Lewis, 62-16-8 (46) with 83 no-decisions and 1 no-contest.

Irish bare-knuckle brawler Dan Donnelly, who fought in the early-19th century, was elected to the Pioneer Category.

European promoters Frank Warren (England) and Mogens Palle (Denmark) were selected in the Non-Participants Category, as was trainer Bill Gore. Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Dave Anderson and longtime RING correspondent Joe Koizumi enter the Observers Category.

Living inductees Holmes, Perkins, Palle, Warren, Anderson, and Koizumi are all expected to be on hand for the induction ceremony.

For additional information regarding Induction Weekend, please go to www.ibhof.com or call 315-697-7095.

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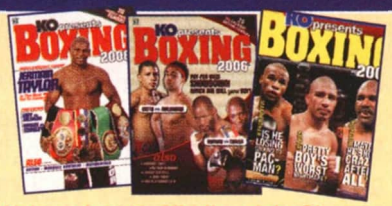

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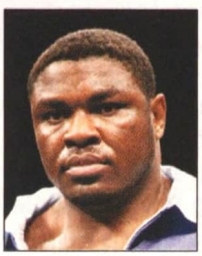
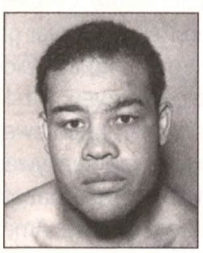
Outside the Ropes

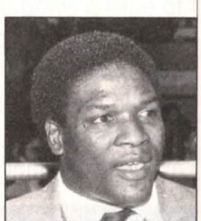
Super middleweight champion **Joe Calzaghe** topped a great year by snagging the prestigious BBC Sports Personality of the Year award for 2007, while junior welterweight champion **Ricky Hatton** finished third. It was a double celebration for the Calzaghe family, as Joe's father and trainer, **Enzo Calzaghe**, was selected as Coach of the Year ... WBC flyweight titleholder **Daisuke Naito** was named Boxer of the Year by the Tokyo Sports Writers Club, the Japan Boxing Commission, and the Japan Professional Boxing Association. All three organizations also selected Naito's title-winning fight against **Ponsaklek Wonjongkam** Fight of the Year ... Nigerian heavyweight contender **Samuel Peter** was presented with the Order of the Niger by Nigerian President **Umaru Yar'Adua** when the fighter returned to his homeland in December ... **Roy Jones** and **Felix Trinidad** have teamed up with Susan G. Komen for the Cure, the world's largest grassroots network of breast cancer survivors and activist, to help educate and raise awareness of the deadly disease. Jones and Trinidad have also agreed to donate $50,000 each from their purses for their January 19 fight at Madison Square Garden ... On Saturday, February 23, HBO debuts ***Joe Louis: America's Hero ... Betrayed***, a new documentary on the legendary heavyweight champion and his tremendous impact on segregated America. "In the mid-'30s, years before Jackie Robinson's arrival in Brooklyn, this boxing champion challenged preconceived notions of race and class," said **Ross Greenburg**, president of HBO Sports. "We will also examine how the government and the IRS turned their backs on this hero and drove him into a desperate state at the end of his boxing career and life" ... The historic boxing belt won by **Teddy Maguire** in 1934 and stolen from the home of Maguire's son in Cheshire, England, was found in a rubbish bin. "The bin was empty and when I opened it to dump the rubbish," said Mr. Maguire, "I was astonished to see the belt in its box in the bin. We are so happy to have the belt back. It means so much to us" ... The Hillsborough County (Florida) State Attorney's Office dropped charges of armed burglary, false imprisonment, witness tampering, and domestic battery against lightweight contender **Nate Campbell**. "After reviewing everything, the state attorney decided not to pursue it," said **Terry Trekas**, Campbell's promoter ... The Nevada State Athletic Commission's disciplinary complaint against Reno middleweight **Joey Gilbert** has been amended to drop the methamphetamine allegation. The NSAC filed the complaint when Gilbert tested positive for methamphetamine, steroids, and four other banned substances following his knockout of **Charles Howe** on September 21, but after a negative test on a B sample conducted by the University of Utah Center for Human Toxicology, the commission dropped the meth charge. "The labs had disagreed, and the tie goes to the fighter," said **Keith Kizer**, the commission's executive director. "I'm still waiting to get the steroid test back from Utah." Gilbert, who is also a boxing promoter, said the allegations caused sponsors to drop him. "It has been a nightmare," he said ... The Utah Supreme Court threw out a lawsuit filed against the Utah Athletic Commission seeking damages for licensing heavyweight **Bradley Rone**, who died after a July 2003 fight that he accepted on late notice. According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, the court ruled that the commission, which regulates boxing in the state, is protected by the state's Government Immunity Act ... A jury in Kingston, Jamaica, has found **Harold Berbick**, the 21-year-old nephew of former WBC heavyweight titleholder **Trevor Berbick**, and 19-year-old **Kenton Gordon** guilty of manslaughter in the bludgeoning death of the 54-year-old former fighter in October 2006. Harold Berbick had been involved with in a land dispute with his uncle, which was believed to be the motive behind the killing ... Russian Boxing promoter **Alexey Plotnikov**, 30, was killed in a road accident on November 18 when a large truck lost control in bad weather and crashed into his car ... California boxing judge **Chuck Hassett**, 72, lost his battle with cancer on December 11. Hassett was born in Philadelphia, where he boxed as an amateur. He relocated to California and began his career as a ring official in 1969. The first title fight he worked was **Ruben Olivares**' 15-round decision over **Chucho Castillo** in April '71 to regain the bantamweight title. Hassett's final assignment was the **Tony Thompson-Timor Abragimov** heavyweight bout in February '07.



Peter: Honored in his homeland



Louis: HBO documentary on tap



Berbick: Nephew convicted

Quotable

"Very few fighters go out as unbeaten champs. Rocky Marciano did and that's how I want to go out."

—Super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe, discussing his plans to retire following two more bouts

"He'll say he won't fight Cotto because of me, because of Bob Arum. But that's not it. He doesn't want to take a chance. He'll never fight Cotto. Never, ever."

—Promoter Bob Arum, on why he thinks a Floyd Mayweather-Miguel Cotto match will not happen

Ratings Analysis

For Period Ended December 17, 2007

Heavyweights: No changes.
Cruiserweights: No changes.
Light Heavyweights: Danny Green enters the ratings at nine, replacing Stipe Drews, whom Green defeated by decision.
Super Middleweights: No changes.
Middleweights: Wayne Elcock (ninth last issue) departs after second-rated Arthur Abraham stopped him in five rounds. John Duddy debuts at 10, with Raymond Joval (10th last issue) moving up to nine.
Junior Middleweights: Joachim Alcine (sixth last issue) switches places with Sergei Dzinziruk due to Alcine's greater activity.
Welterweights: No changes.
Junior Welterweights: No changes.
Lightweights: Alamazbek Raiymkulov (seventh last issue) exits due to inactivity, making room for Amir Khan to debut in the ratings at eight and boosting Yuri Romanov (ninth last issue) to seven. The reshuffling drops Zahir Raheem (eighth last issue) to nine.

PHOTO BY ANDREW YATES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Lightweight Amir Khan debuts at eight in the ratings, thanks to his fist-round stoppage of Graham Earl

Junior Lightweights: No changes.
Featherweights: No changes.
Junior Featherweights: No changes.
Bantamweights: No changes.
Junior Bantamweights: No changes.
Flyweights: Denkaosan Kaovichit debuts at eight, replacing Brahim Asloum, who moved down to junior flyweight.
Junior Flyweights: Asloum moves in at 10 after defeating Juan Carlos Reveco (10th last issue).
Strawweights: Oleydong Sithsamerchai (eighth last issue) leaps to three after decisioning Eagle Kyowa (third last issue). Everyone from four to seven drops down a notch due to the reshuffling.
Pound-for-pound: No changes.

The Ring
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather** Welterweight
2. **Manny Pacquiao** Junior Lightweight
3. **Juan Manuel Marquez** Junior Lightweight
4. **Bernard Hopkins** Light Heavyweight
5. **Joe Calzaghe** Super Middleweight
6. **Israel Vazquez** Junior Featherweight
7. **Miguel Cotto** Welterweight
8. **Ricky Hatton** Junior Welterweight
9. **Winky Wright** Middleweight
10. **Rafael Marquez** Junior Featherweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended December 17, 2007

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

The Ring Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of The Ring Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

John Duddy debuts in the rankings as the 10th-rated middleweight

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 49-3 (44)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 29-1 (22)
3. **OLEG MASKAEV** Staten Island, NY 34-5 (26)
4. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 23-0-1 (17)
5. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 47-1 (34)
6. **SULTAN IBRAGIMOV** Russia 22-0-1 (17)
7. **SERGEI LIAKHOVICH** Belarus, 23-2 (14)
8. **VLADIMIR VIRCHIS** Ukraine 24-1 (20)
9. **TONY THOMPSON** Washington, D.C. 31-1 (19)
10. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN** Russia 14-0 (11)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-4 (11)
2. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 36-2-1 (23)
3. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-5 (30)
4. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 40-2 (29)
5. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Canada 30-0 (19)
6. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK** Germany 34-0 (22)
7. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 25-1 (19)
8. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-4-1 (31)
9. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 41-10-1 (21)
10. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** Spain 40-1-1 (21)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 40-0-1 (21)
2. **ROBERT GUERRERO** Gilroy, CA 21-1-1 (14)
3. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 31-3-1 (18)
4. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 27-0-1 (19)
5. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 32-1-2 (23)
6. **NAOKI MATSUDA** Japan 28-7-3 (11)
7. **STEVEN LUEVANO** La Puente, CA 34-1 (15)
8. **JORGE LINARES** Venezuela 25-0 (16)
9. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 24-4-1 (12)
10. **NICKY COOK** England 27-1(15)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 42-4 (31)

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 37-4 (33)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 28-2 (19)
3. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 34-1 (30)
4. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 25-0 (10)
5. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 53-2-1 (43)
6. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 29-1 (17)
7. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 27-4 (17)
8. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 30-1 (20)
9. **KIKO MARTINEZ** Spain 17-0 (14)
10. **REY BAUTISTA** Philippines 24-1(18)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 22-2 (7)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 58-3-2 (42)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 20-0-2 (7)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 20-2 (16)
5. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 52-6-2 (35)
6. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 35-6 (29)
7. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 31-1-2 (20)
8. **JOSEPH AGBEKO** Ghana 25-1 (22)
9. **SIMONE MALUDROTTU** Italy 25-1 (10)
10. **LUIS PEREZ** Nicaragua 25-2 (16)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: DAVID HAYE
England 20-1 (19)

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 20-1 (10)
2. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
France 33-4 (22)
3. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 26-2-1 (24)
4. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 39-2 (29)
5. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
Wales 28-1 (21)
6. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 28-3-1 (18)
7. **MARCO HUCK**
Germany 19-0 (13)
8. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 24-1-1 (17)
9. **DARNELL WILSON**
Tacoma Park, MD 22-5-3 (19)
10. **JOHNATHON BANKS**
Detroit, MI 18-0 (13)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 48-4-1 (32)

1. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 28-0 (17)
2. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 41-3-1 (24)
3. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 26-4 (19)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 46-11-2 (31)
5. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 25-0 (17)
6. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 26-3 (18)
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 41-4 (25)
8. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Canada 24-0 (15)
9. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 25-3 (22)
10. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 30-3 (17)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 44-0 (32)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 39-1 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 30-3 (23)
3. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 21-0 (17)
4. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 23-1 (17)
5. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 26-1 (20)
6. **CARL FROCH**
England 22-0 (18)
7. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 25-1 (18)
8. **SAKIO BIKA**
Australia 25-3-2 (15)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
Germany 32-0 (24)
10. **JEAN PASCAL**
Canada 20-0 (14)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 32-0 (29)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-4-1 (25)
2. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 25-0 (20)
3. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
Little Rock, AK 27-1-1 (17)
4. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 28-2-1 (12)
5. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 62-7 (42)
6. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 27-2 (13)
7. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 22-1 (15)
8. **RANDY GRIFFIN**
Louisville, KY 24-1-3 (12)
9. **RAYMOND JOVAL**
Netherlands 37-4 (16)
10. **JOHN DUDDY**
Ireland 23-0 (17)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 39-0 (25)

1. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 31-0 (25)
2. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 33-0 (24)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 44-5 (37)
4. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 35-5 (25)
5. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 36-5 (25)
6. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 29-1 (27)
7. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 27-3 (13)
8. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Bronx, NY 32-2 (19)
9. **JACKSON BONSU**
Belgium 26-1 (23)
10. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 38-4 (12)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 43-1 (31)

1. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 36-1-2 (21)
2. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
Brooklyn, NY 23-1 (5)
3. **GAVIN REES**
Wales 27-0 (13)
4. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 28-3-1 (18)
5. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 36-2-1 (21)
6. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 45-9-1 (30)
7. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 37-4-1 (27)
8. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 28-0-1 (11)
9. **RICARDO TORRES**
Colombia, 32-1 (28)
10. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 22-2 (12)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR
Miami, FL 35-3-1 (21)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 33-0 (17)
2. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 33-1-1 (17)
3. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 25-3 (14)
4. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 34-4 (25))
5. **NATE CAMPBELL**
Jacksonville, FL 31-5-1 (25)
6. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 23-0 (20)
7. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 20-2 (13)
8. **AMIR KHAN**
England 15-0 (12)
9. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 28-2 (16)
10. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
Washington, DC 25-0 (18)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 45-3-2 (35)
2. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 48-3-1 (35)
3. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 28-0 (17)
4. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 23-0 (23)
5. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 43-6-2 (27)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 47-3-1 (34)
7. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 26-1 (19)
8. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 50-3-1 (39)
9. **MZONKE FANA**
South Africa 27-3 (10)
10. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 34-3-1 (18)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 33-2 (17)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 31-2 (27)
3. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 10-1 (6)
4. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
Mexico 33-3-2 (14)
5. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 35-2-1 (26)
6. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 48-4-1 (37)
7. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 32-6 (21)
8. **DIMITRI KIRILOV**
Russia 29-3 (9)
9. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 26-3 (12)
10. **Z GORRES**
Philippines 27-2-1 (15)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE**
San Leandro, CA 19-1 (12)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 32-2-2 (20)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 67-3 (35)
4. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 31-4-2 (15)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 25-0-2 (16)
6. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 29-1(23)
7. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 24-2 (17)
8. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
Thailand 40-1-1 (16)
9. **JOSE LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 35-7-2 (29)
10. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 16-0 (11)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 30-0 (6)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 26-1-2 (20)
2. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 25-4-1 (19)
3. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Bell Gardens, CA 18-0-1 (14)
4. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 30-5 (16)
5. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 24-2-1 (10)
6. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 39-5-1 (30)
7. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 24-4-2 (13)
8. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 19-2 (12)
9. **OMAR SALADO**
Mexico 17-0-2 (9)
10. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 23-2 (9)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 22-1-3 (8)
2. **FLORANTE CONDES**
Philippines 22-3-1 (20)
3. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 25-0 (9)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 18-2 (6)
5. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 61-6-5 (31)
6. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 18-3 (7)
7. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
Nicaragua 15-0 (15)
8. **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines 22-1-3 (13)
9. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 23-2 (18)
10. **OMAR SOTO**
Puerto Rico 13-1-1 (6)

By Jeff Ryan

Ricky Did Lose That Number

If the Floyd Mayweather-Ricky Hatton fight was a major motion picture, it's safe to say that it wouldn't have received four stars from the critics. Its title, "Undefeated," was pretty bland. Its soundtrack—thousands of inebriated British fans singing, "Walking In A Hatton Wonderland," repeatedly—was annoying. And no one who saw it will be clamoring for a sequel, even though the storyline presented us with more loose ends than the swimsuit competition at a West Palm Beach retirement village.

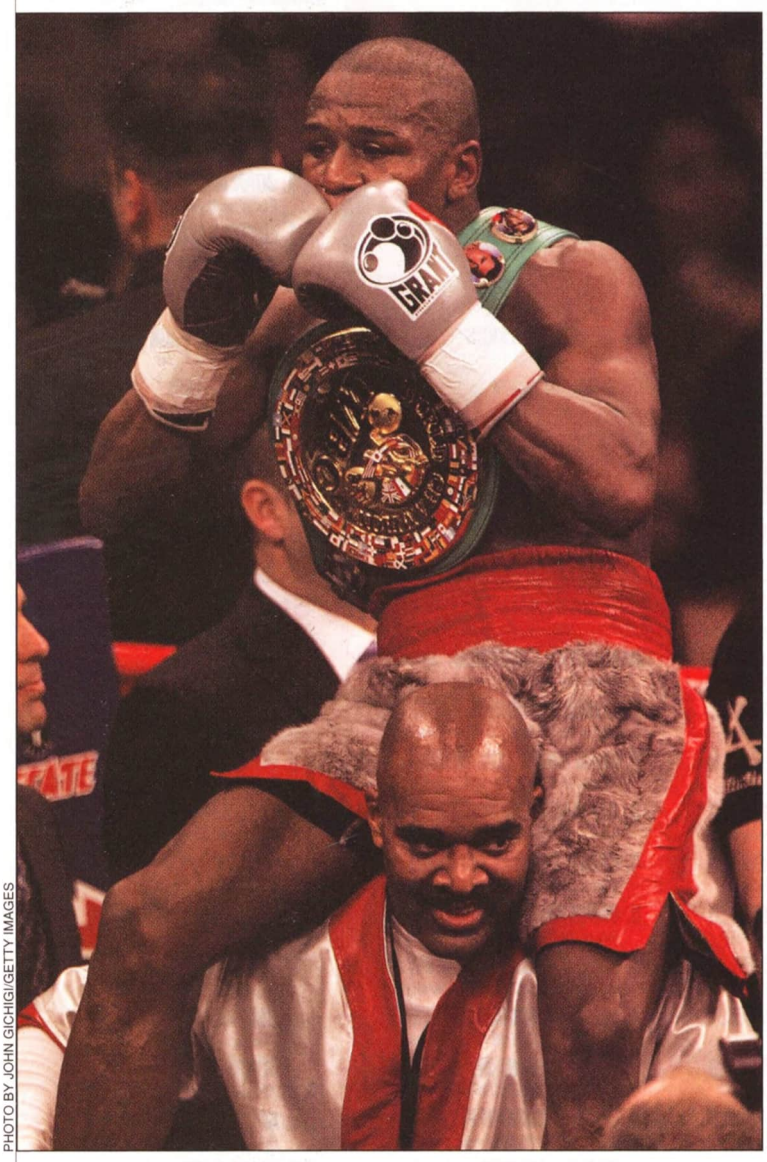


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

A very familiar sight

There was plenty of action, sure, but also an outcome that we'd seen 38 times before: Mayweather being carried around the ring with a big smile on his face. His 10th-round knockout came after he'd been forced to reach deeper than usual to keep his record perfect, but we really didn't glean any new information during that half-hour interrogation under the ring lights of Las Vegas' MGM Grand. All it did was reconfirm the reconfirmation of a lot of things we already knew.

For instance …

•"Pretty Boy" won't answer all of our questions until he answers a doctor's between rounds: There's only one way we'll learn if Mayweather is an all-time great, and that's by seeing his response when he's seriously hurt. Not when a Hatton roughs him up on the inside or an Oscar De La Hoya catches him with a hook, but when somebody floors him, staggers him badly, busts his nose, puts him in a deep hole on the scorecards, or does something else that sends the champ to a dark place he's never been before.

At similar stages in their careers, Mike Tyson and Roy Jones hadn't yet encountered serious adversity and were being touted as two of the finest gladiators who'd ever turned a pair of sweat socks funky. Then they faced their first major crises—Tyson in the form of a fearless Buster Douglas and Jones at the end of Antonio Tarver's overhand left—and the two alleged immortals dropped off their pedestals like Acapulco cliff-divers.

True, it's hard to imagine Mayweather, a master craftsman with better defensive skills than the aforementioned clay-footed idols, getting overwhelmed one of these nights. But we're clamoring for something more than a little puffiness around his eyes to provide some insight into what's inside his heart and soul.

•In its never-ending quest for angles and controversy, the media often creates something out of nothing: We're almost as good at that as we are at bitching about our seats in the press section. It was actually suggested by some scribes that Mayweather was bored with boxing, dangerously distracted, and primed for an upset. The evidence: His decision to compete on the ABC reality show *Dancing With The Stars*.

So much for the "mistake" of putting on his boogie

shoes. All the smiling, fun-loving Mayweather was doing was trying to make himself more appealing to the mainstream. He apparently doesn't see the hypocrisy in the fact that his HBO personality (he came across as a foul-mouthed, money-hungry, arrogant thug on those *24/7* series that preceded the De La Hoya and Hatton bouts) differs so completely from his ABC persona.

•Pressure fighters are fun to watch, but not to bet on: Steamrollers like Hatton always look their best when the guys in front of them—in his case, a Kostya Tszyu or Jose Luis Castillo—are standing in one spot like a Salvation Army kettle-keeper. At the elite level, however, crisp counterpunching and slick movement often render the buzz saws ineffective. For the first time in his career, Hatton ate a world-class jab on many of his forays inside. He encountered the best upper body movement in the sport. And he was blasted with blistering combinations from previously unseen angles.

It's said that styles make fights, but it's often *stylists* that make fights. They make them go just the way they'd like them to go if the rival charging toward them doesn't possess one-punch power, has a tendency to cut, and leaves himself wide open. There's a reason Hatton's nose is as crooked as a Josh Beckett curveball.

•Asking a boxer his plans is like asking a drunk for directions: Mayweather took fighters talking postfight nonsense to a new level when he said he desired an extended break from the ring, specifically all of 2008 and 2009. Hey, Floyd, we've heard of recharging the old Duracell, but this is ridiculous.

Pretty Boy does realize that by the time he returned he'd be 33 years old, rustier than an abandoned '76 Ford Torino in a Maine beach town, and probably devoid of big-money foes whose records haven't been blemished in some way by then. Doesn't he? Tennis hustler Bobby Riggs used to try to even the odds by playing with an umbrella in one hand or a leashed dog tied to his wrist. Maybe this is simply Mayweather's idea for leveling a playing field that right now looks like an alpine ski slope.

•Mayweather still has more options than he'd like us to believe: Miguel Cotto probably wouldn't upset the Pretty Boy, but he hits hard, and if he can establish his lethal body attack, the night could get interesting. Antonio Margarito hasn't been legitimately stopped in his career, Paul Williams is undefeated, and Kermit Cintron was recently named the sixth-hardest hitter, pound-for-pound, by THE RING. That's quite a busy schedule right there. The problem, as Mayweather sees it, is that with the exception of Cotto, none of those risks bring a worthwhile financial reward.

•British fans need to put down the plastic cups and pick up a book on etiquette: Those ticket-buyers from across the pond are to sports fandom what the aftereffects of three-bean chili are to aromatherapy. Forget the soccer riots. The Brits have plenty of inglorious history in the fight game. Remember when Marvin Hagler got about one millisecond to celebrate his winning the middleweight crown before the bottles rained down on him in London? Then there was the throng in Birmingham two years ago who celebrated the return of a major fight card to their city after a 12-year absence due to rioting. How did they show their appreciation? By once again rioting.

At least the Brits usually confine their poor sportsmanship to their own country. But here they were on American soil, booing "The Star-Spangled Banner." Nice. Their own musical contribution to the evening was that idiotic Hatton Christmas carol. Imagine if a bunch of drunken Casamayor fans serenaded us with "The First Joel." Or a crowd broke into a chorus of "Jingle Bell Rahman." We'd call for the straitjackets.

You blokes need to impose a two-beer maximum on yourselves and respect your surroundings. Or don't bother making the trip next time. ■

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

No two-beer minimum for these lads

By Ivan Goldman

Vargas-Mayorga Musings

I lead off this month with stuff that, because of space limitations, I couldn't include in my feature story last month on the Ricardo Mayorga-Fernando Vargas fight, a contest I covered live from Staples Center in L.A. Pay no attention to the rumor that meat inspectors ruled some of the following material unfit for human consumption.

In the past, I've invited Don and Carl King, the cozy father and son that respectively promote and manage Mayorga, to make public the paperwork on all the fighters governed by the same folksy arrangement so we can see, after all the familial slicing and dicing, just how much of the purse gets to the guy who takes the punches. The invitation still stands. In the meantime, it's not terribly surprising to see that Mayorga, at age 34, never, to my knowledge, even discusses retiring. The fact that he's involved in seemingly endless and expensive criminal and civil court actions back in Nicaragua is no help to his pension plan either.

Carl, who takes after his dad in never wanting to let go of a microphone, proved that, in the world of standup comedy, he's no Seinfeld. In the midst of his amplified, postfight ramble on the podium, Don's son quipped that he and Vargas may do some promoting together in the future because his daddy was with the troops in Iraq that night "and not everyone comes back from Iraq." I kid you not.

Vargas, who'd pigged his way up to 264 pounds before training camp, was so eager to get back to his prefight bloatmanship that he became possibly the only fighter in the history of the sport to be gobbling munchies during the postfight press conference. The drive back to his Camarillo home was nearly 60 miles. It wouldn't astonish me to learn that the Great Engorger made an emergency doughnut stop along the way and had a load of pizzas and burritos waiting for him in the driveway. People are always asking the newly retired what they're going to do now. In Vargas' case, I think we can safely predict that the future involves plenty of food.

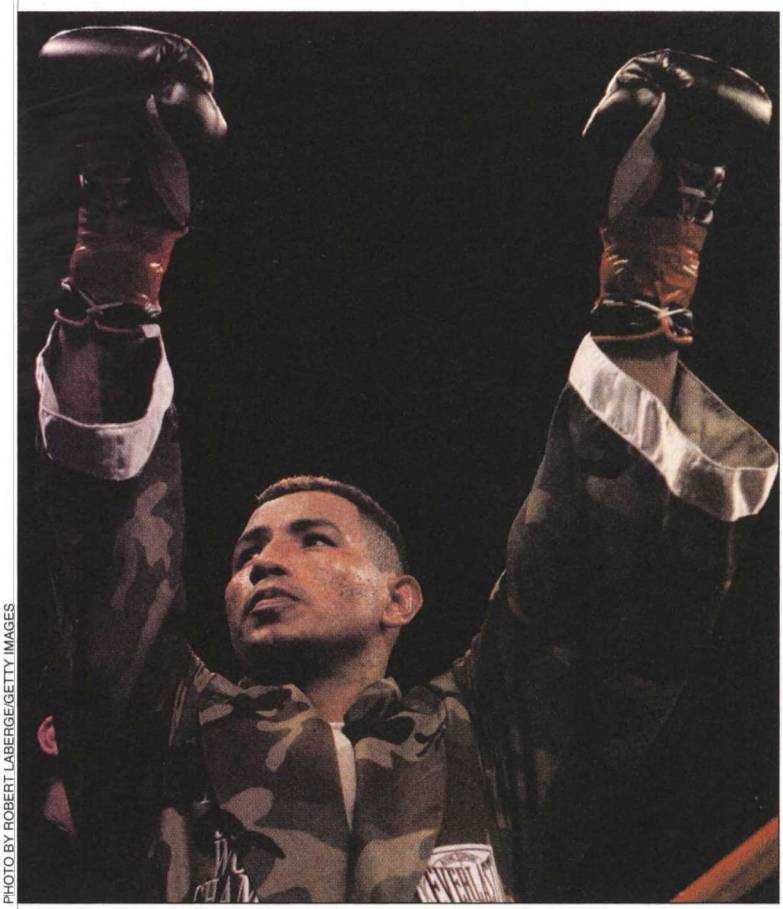


PHOTO BY ROBERT LABERGE/GETTY IMAGES

Mayorga: Still working on his retirement plan

Retired promoter Don Fraser told me he understands that Vargas (no kidding) intends to get into the pizza business. This leaves a joke opening so big I'll let you make it yourself. But I advise you to pile on plenty of cheese.

Back to Mayorga: After the fight, everyone said he throws all those filthy insults at his opponents and their female family members because he's just trying to build the gate, or, as Mayorga claimed on the postfight podium, that's how he gets into the proper frame of mind to compete in the ring. Vargas' co-manager Shelly Finkel said that after one of Mayorga's outbursts "he winked at me." According to Finkel, the guy was just selling tickets. But I lean more toward the assessment of baseball graybeard Tommy Lasorda. After Lasorda's friend Oscar De La Hoya beat the hell out of Mayorga in Las Vegas, Tommy proclaimed that anybody who makes ugly comments about your wife and your family "is a scumbag."

I'm sure Mayorga had a rough life growing up in busted-up Managua, but at some point in your life you have to take responsibility for your own deeds, and if Mayorga has to insult a guy's wife to get his

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Ref Raul Caiz Sr. watches Vargas hit the deck

mind where he needs it to be, his personality needs some serious remodeling.

Incidentally, De La Hoya, who's been telling everybody that his fight with Floyd Mayweather "saved boxing," finally got someone to believe him. The *L.A. Times*' Lance Pugmire wrote a piece that accepted much of Oscar's claim. I don't believe Pugmire was covering the fight scene back when De La Hoya used to tell everyone he's carrying the sport on his shoulders. It would have helped him judge the latest claim with greater accuracy.

People ask me all the time whether anything around here's changed since Oscar bought the magazine. Heck no. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to run out and fetch his laundry (I'm kidding, I'm kidding).

Russell In Exile: When Armando Garcia came from Florida to be interviewed for his present job as the California commission's executive director, he pledged to pull in more money for the commission. His principal tool for achieving this was to regulate cage fighting. Mixed martial arts cards now pay a percentage of the gate to the commission the same as boxing. But these MMA guys bring in extra cash because so many of them have to pay stiff fines after they test positive for drugs. And that's no joke.

Meanwhile, boxing referees looking for a way to pull in more work, rushed in to get certified for MMA. That doesn't necessarily mean they've fallen in love with it.

One of them told me it just doesn't feel right to a guy brought up in boxing to have to stand there and let a fighter sit on another guy's chest and punch him in the face.

It's no secret that under Garcia's regime a disproportionate share of big fights are refereed by the Caiz family (Raul Jr. and Sr.). Pat Russell, who had been Garcia's principal competition for the director's job, used to referee his share of main events. But under Garcia's rule, his formal rival languishes mostly as a judge instead. Pat, a retired investigator for the San Diego District Attorney and an infantry officer in Vietnam, won't discuss his lack of assignments. I once asked Garcia about it, and he named a big fight he said he'd assign Russell to referee. "But don't tell Pat," he said. "I want to tell him myself." Russell didn't get the fight.

Penalized With Spinks: I don't know what fans did to annoy Don King, but it must have really upset him because he slapped Cory Spinks on the undercard of the Roy Jones-Felix Trinidad pay-per-view card. King had put together a sort of interesting match between two over-the-hill former greats that, boxing fox that he is, he knew certain fans couldn't resist paying to see. But when he lined up Spinks against 39-year-old Verno Phillips for the co-feature, that was like topping a strawberry sundae with a rusty screw. (Golden Boy's Mayweather-Hatton undercard was no gem either).

Spinks, who was 36-4-1 (11) going in, has made a science of scoring points while avoiding a real fight. Skittering around the ring like a Chihuahua on the edge of a nervous breakdown, he makes the young Chris Byrd look like Sonny Liston by comparison. Spinks uses "The Next Generation" as his boxing nickname. Now there's a ghastly prediction. Prior to the Phillips contest, he hadn't stopped an opponent in seven years. That opponent, Dennis Allen, had competed outside his native North

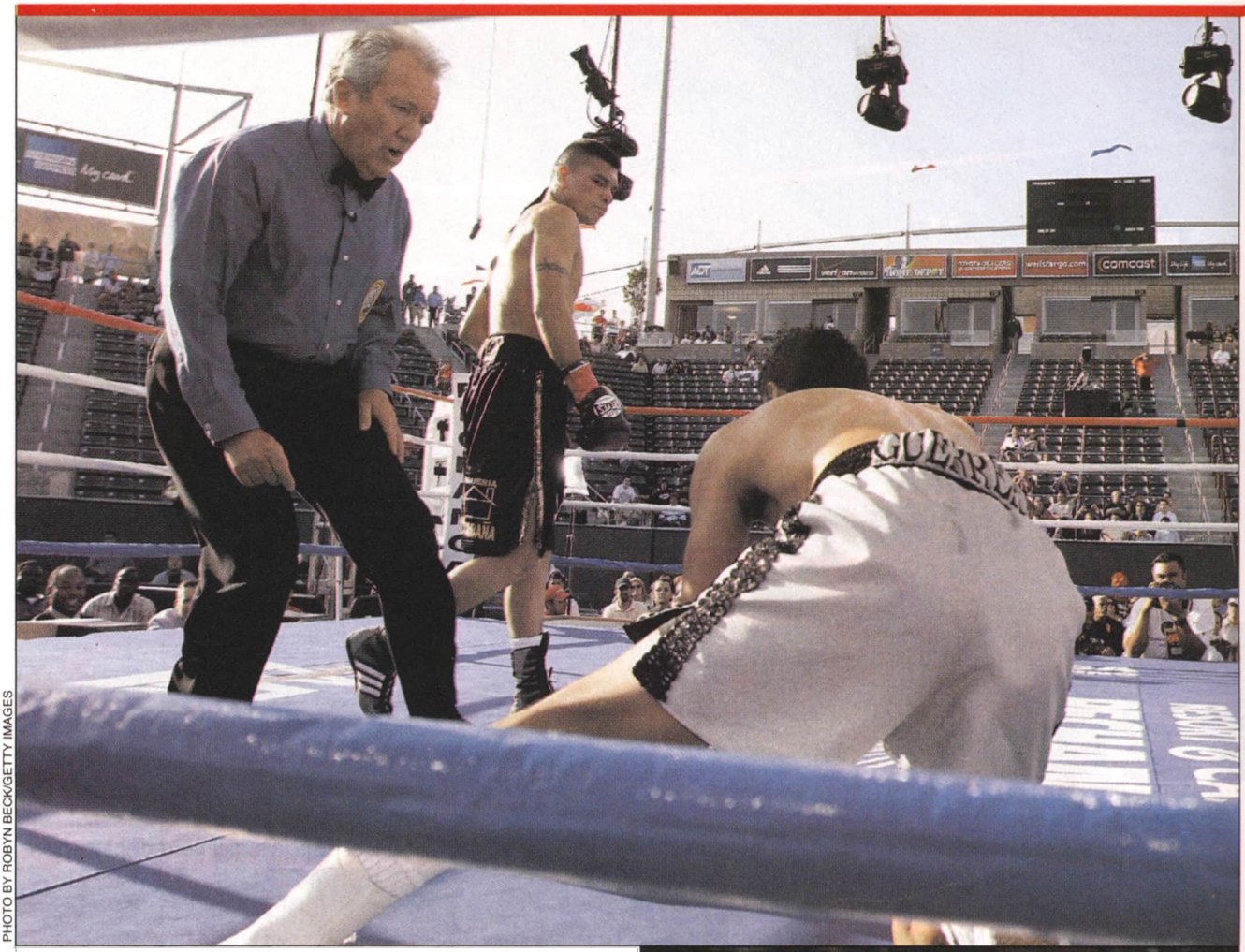


PHOTO BY ROBYN BECK/GETTY IMAGES

Pat Russell counts over Gerson Guerrero

Dakota twice in his 20 fights. As it stands now, Spinks is a safety hazard because some of the fans who fall asleep watching him could tumble out of their seats and hurt themselves. If he hangs up his gloves in time, maybe he can get in on the ground floor as an employee-investor in Vargas' pizza joint.

Quotes Of The Month:

"I'm going to get you. I'm going to wreck your face."

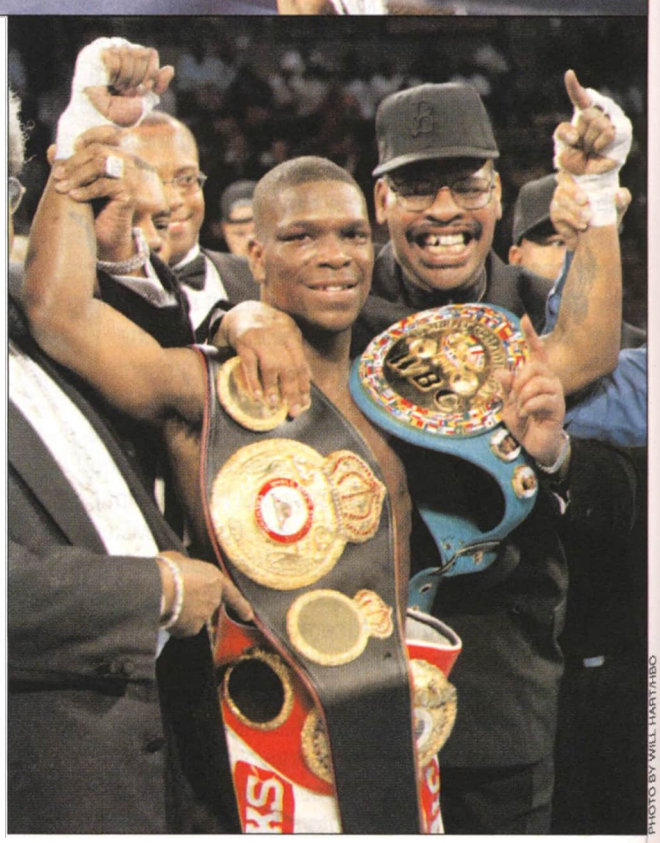
—Bernard Hopkins to Joe Calzaghe

"I've been fighting for 25 years. I have this face for a reason."

—Calzaghe to Hopkins

Need I mention this is an interesting matchup? Interesting, not great, because though Hopkins is a great fighter, in middle age the key to his strategy is making sure a great fight doesn't break out. But Calzaghe's speed and tricky style could change that. In fact, I'll upgrade it to a can't-afford-to-miss fight.

Magoos: All those repulsive, ill-informed British fans who dishonored themselves by jeering the American National Anthem at Hatton vs. Mayweather. Shabby, shabby house-guests. If they'd stop slurping beer a couple of hours, maybe they'd discern that most of the top welters would beat little Ricky. For his brawling style to work, he's got to be stronger



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"The Next Generation" fails to thrill Goldman

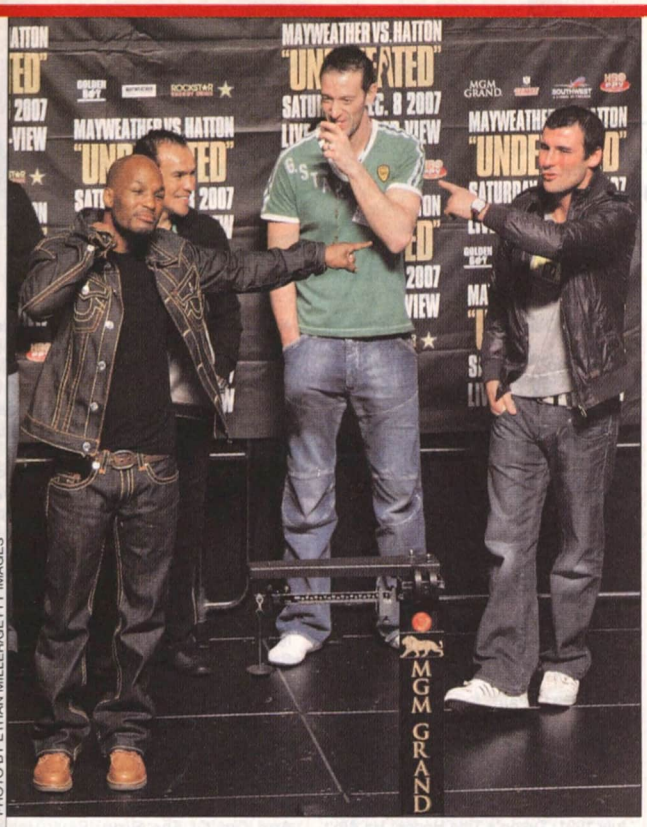


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Hopkins and Calzaghe trade insults at the Mayweather-Hatton weigh-in

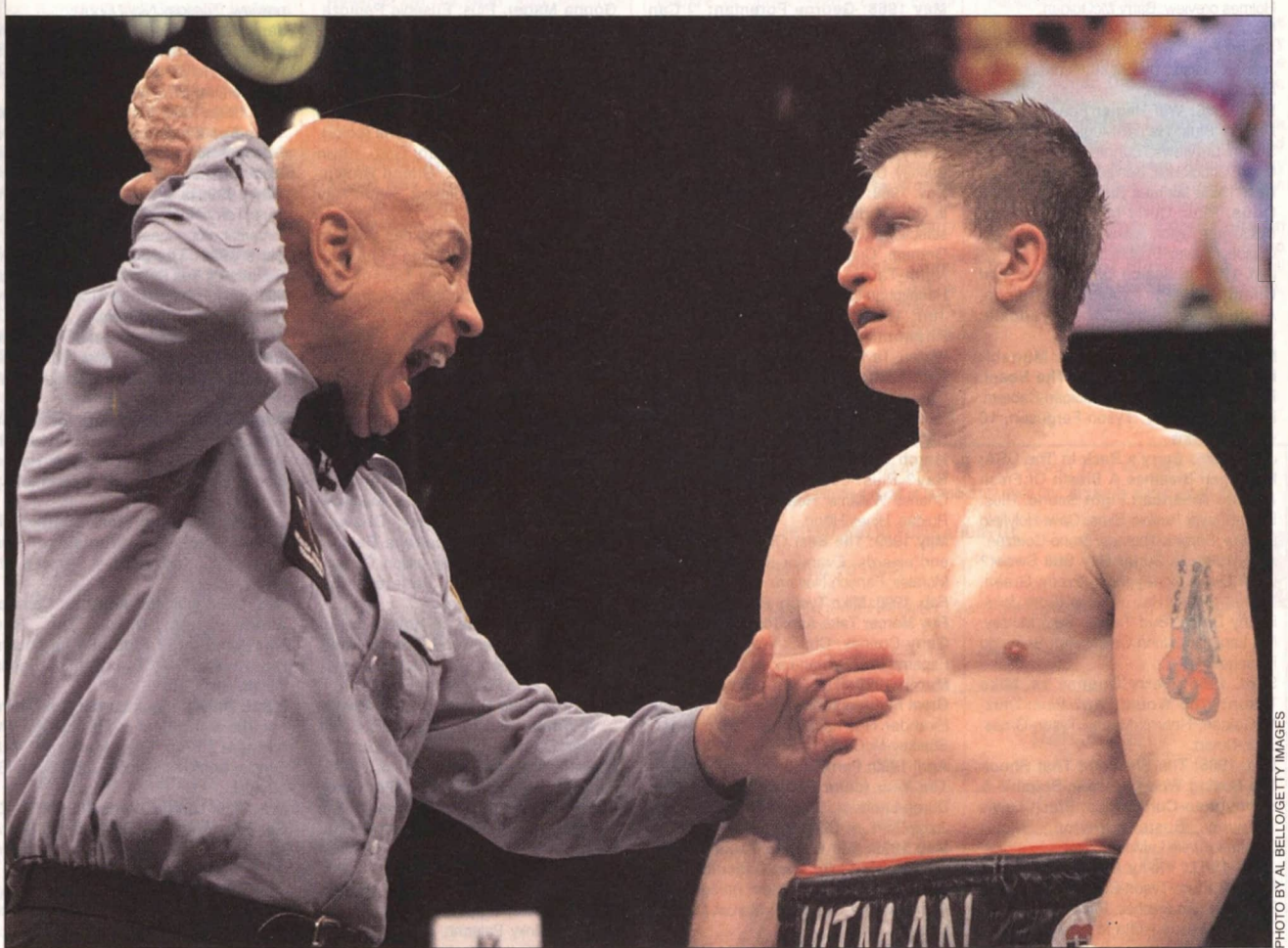
than the other guy.

De La Hoya's way too big for Hatton. I'm already polishing Oscar's Magoo just in case he actually puts that fight together. I know—little Roberto Duran once beat Sugar Ray Leonard. But Hatton, an excellent fighter in his weight class, ain't no Duran.

Also, Harold Lederman's disastrous score had me wondering whether he accidentally ingested the wrong pharmaceuticals. He had Floyd up by only 86-84 through nine rounds. What did he think? Hatton was cleverly breaking down Mayweather's fists with his face?

Effective punching, Harold, effective punching. That's the number-one scoring factor. And guess what: It turns out that scoring clean shots against Pretty Boy is more of a problem than slugging trainer Billy Graham's strap-on heavybag. Shocking, wasn't it? I was seriously awed by how thoroughly Floyd took away Hatton's left hook to the body. Without this centerpiece to his attack strategy, the "Hitman" was an empty fighter.

One More Magoo: To Hatton. That rabbit punch in the sixth round was despicable. While you're at it, why not slug your opponent with a Guinness bottle? That's no alley, mate. It's a sports ring. Fortunately, the rope absorbed most, if not all, the impact. ■



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Cortez docks Hatton a point

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Dec. 2006 (100-Page Extra): Taking The World By Force: "Pretty Boy" Floyd Guns For Baldomir. Also: Oleg Maskaev, Roy Jones, Nino-Viloria, Battling Siki, Argentine fighters.

Feb. 2007 (100-Page Extra): Nicolay Valuev: The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly. Also: Joel Casamayor, Ricky Hatton, The Mosleys, Sugar-Sugar-Oscar, Len Matthews.

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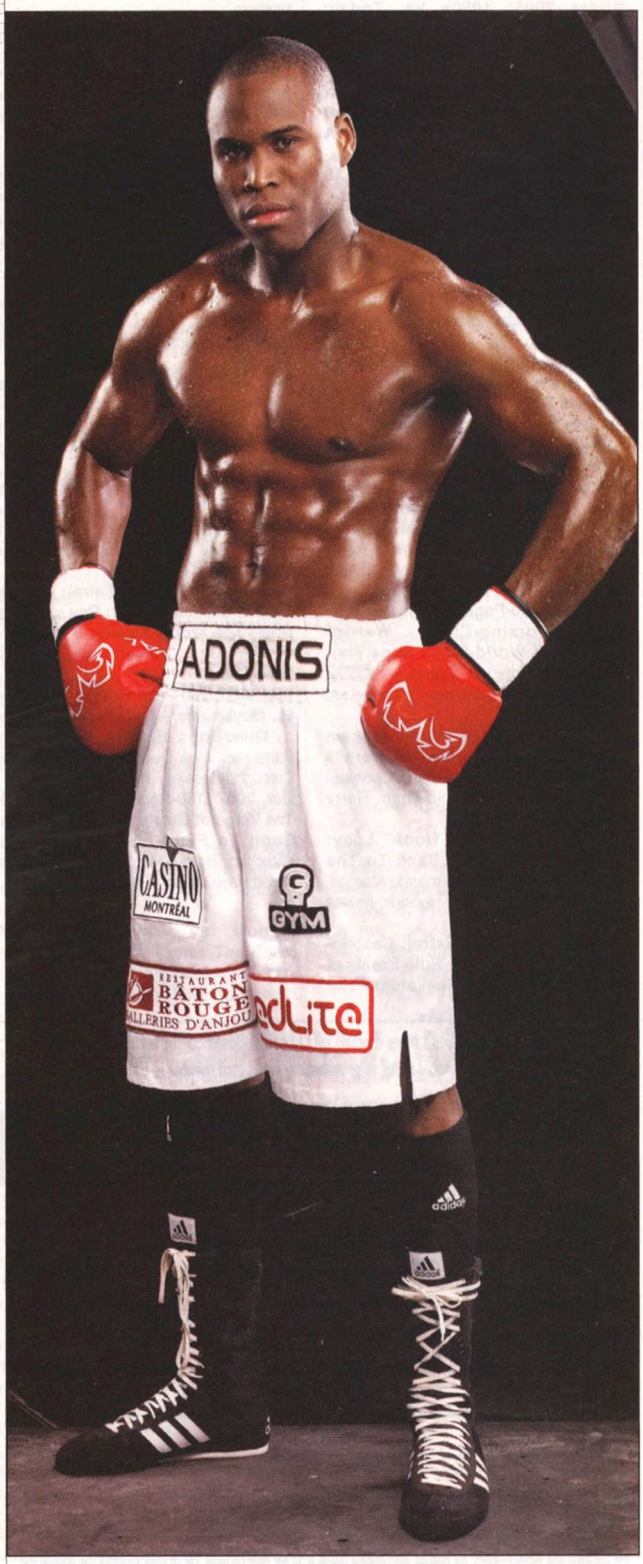
By Paul Salgado

Adonis Stevenson Super Middleweight



Pro Record

2006		
Sept. 9	Mike Funk, Montreal, QC	KO 1
Oct. 28	Ferenc Lankonde, Gatineau, QC	KO 1
Nov. 18	Bonnie Jo McGee, Trois-Rivieres, QC	KO2
Dec. 11	Eduardo Calderon, Montreal	KO 1
2007		
Feb. 10	Etienne Whitaker, Montreal	KO 1
April 14	Carl Cockerham, Montreal	W 6
May 12	Marcus Thomas, Montreal	KO 1
June 8	Alvaro Enrique, Montreal	KO 1
Aug. 3	Marlon Hayes, Montreal	W 8
Dec. 7	David Whittom, Montreal	W 10

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
10	10	0	0	7

Stevenson Adonis switched his name to Adonis Stevenson because he thought it would place greater emphasis on the name of the Greek god symbolizing physical perfection. It may smack of conceit, but no one can argue with the impressive figure the undefeated Stevenson cuts in the ring these days.

His punches are actually more evocative of the Germanic god Thor, given the hammering he routinely deals opponents, and so far, seven of his 10 victims haven't heard the final bell after feeling his thunder. But for Stevenson, that is nothing new. Ever since his amateur days in Canada, his knockout power has been the stuff of legend.

When asked about his uncanny power, the soft-spoken Stevenson simply laughed: "I don't know where it comes from. You would have to ask my mother. It's God-given."

"Ungodly" might be the word his knockout victims prefer to use. Certainly, Mike Blunt, Stevenson's first professional opponent would. Within seconds of the first bell, Blunt took a short right hook from the 5'11" southpaw and was immediately dropped for the count. Incredibly, it was the very first punch Stevenson threw.

Ironically, Stevenson doesn't even consider the right hook to be his most dangerous weapon.

"My best punch? My left, my straight left. It's a killer," said Stevenson, with more laughter.

The moment Stevenson lands a punch, it has an instantly paralyzing effect on an opponent, according to the fighter's promoter, Yvon Michel, president of Montreal-based GYM. Once sampled, it usually inspires fear and quickly changes the complexion of his fights.

"Once he hits them, their faces change. It's like: *What's happening?*" said Michel. "For everybody it's a shock. For people who spar with him it's the same. It's exceptional, the way he hits."

Born in Haiti, Stevenson arrived in Montreal at the age of six to be with his mother, who had emigrated to Canada two years earlier. Growing up, he briefly competed in track and field at school, but otherwise showed little interest in sports. He gravitated to boxing at the relatively late age of 18, encouraged to try out the sport by a cousin who saw

(Continued on 123)

BACK ISSUES OF BOXING 88/2005

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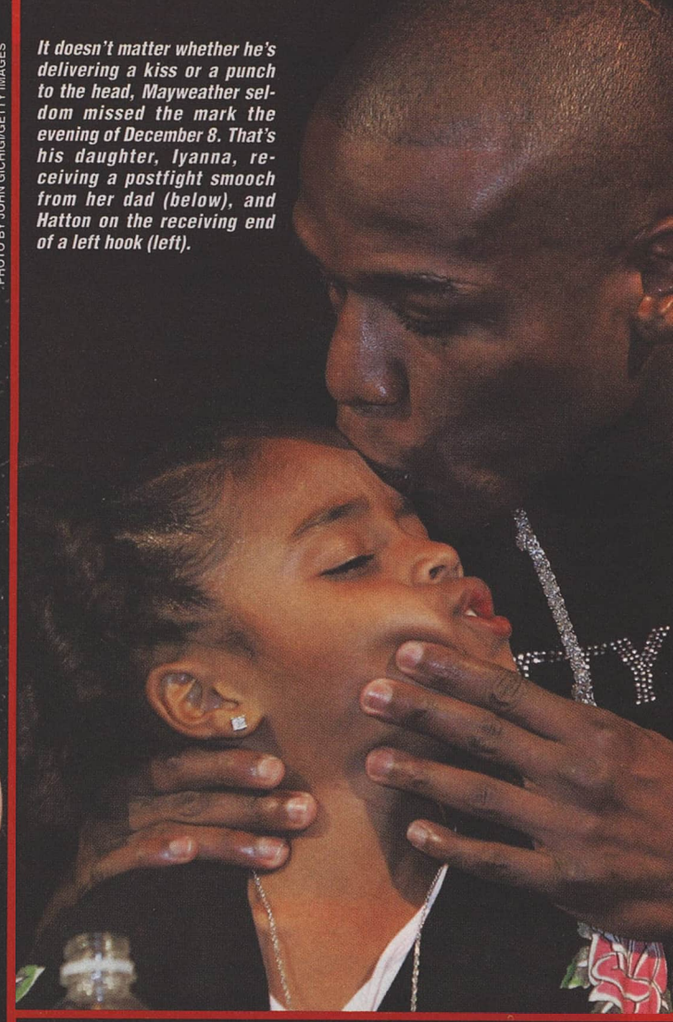
It doesn't matter whether he's delivering a kiss or a punch to the head, Mayweather seldom missed the mark the evening of December 8. That's his daughter, Iyanna, receiving a postfight smooch from her dad (below), and Hatton on the receiving end of a left hook (left).



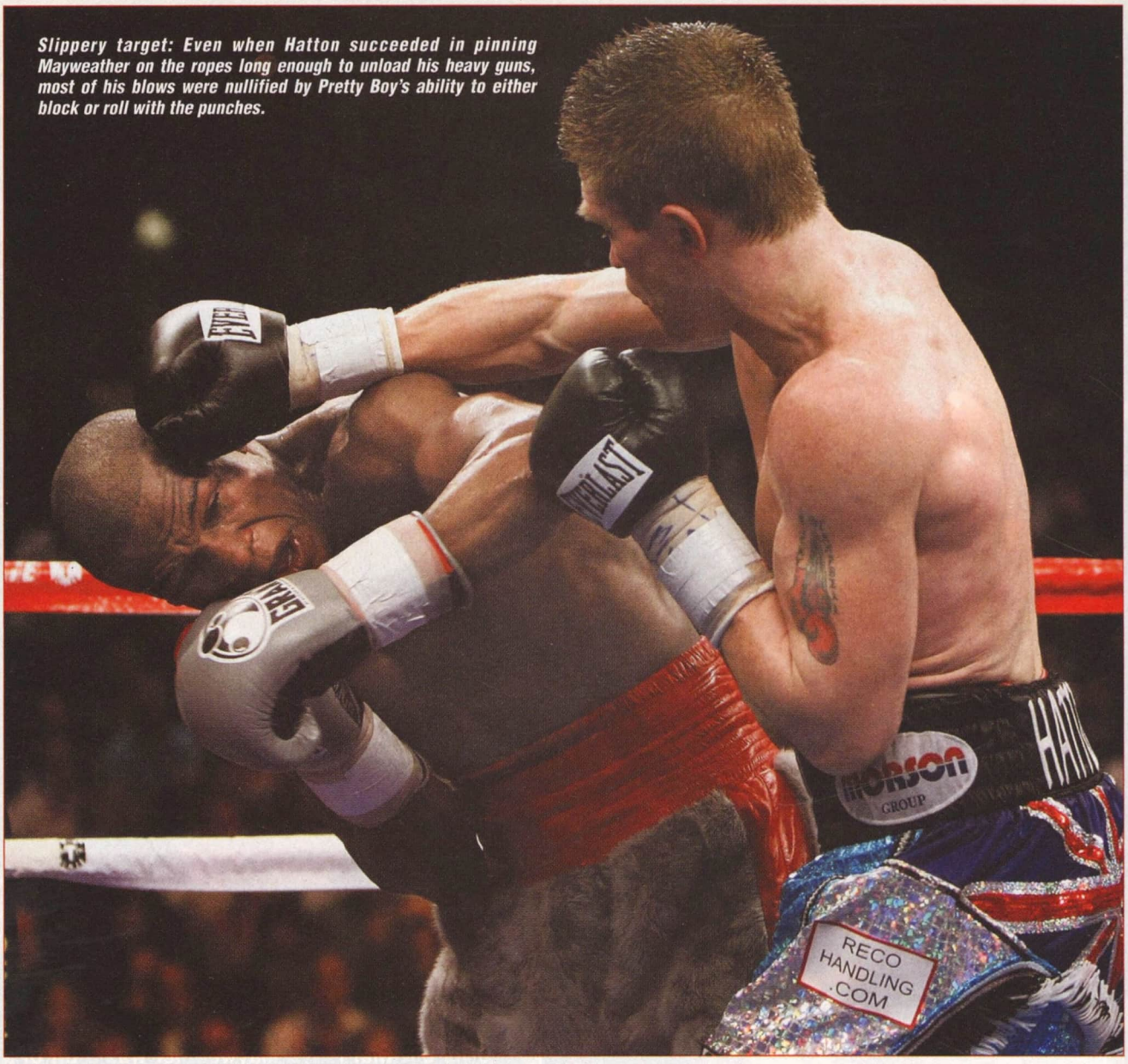
MONEY MAYWEATHER

The Right Man At The Right Time With The Right Opponents

By Nigel Collins

It turns out that Floyd Mayweather was a bit of a late-bloomer after all. Not as a fighter, of course. He was recognized as a prodigy at an early age and has lived up to all expectations. But "Pretty Boy's" recent flowering as an important pay-per-view player, not to mention his flirtation with mainstream celebrity status, has come as a bit of a surprise, especially considering he won his first major belt almost 10 years ago.

But in the wake of a huge year in 2007, a strong argument can now be made that, except for undisputed PPV champ Oscar De La Hoya, Mayweather is boxing's biggest attraction. True, he's always needed a popular



Slippery target: Even when Hatton succeeded in pinning Mayweather on the ropes long enough to unload his heavy guns, most of his blows were nullified by Pretty Boy's ability to either block or roll with the punches.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

opponent to draw a crowd, starting with Arturo Gatti in June '05 when their fight was sold to approximately 340,000 homes. But the numbers have steadily grown since then, peaking in '07 when he participated with "The Golden Boy" in the richest prizefight of all-time.

Mayweather's bout with Ricky Hatton didn't approach the 2.4 million buys generated by his record-setter with Oscar, but the roughly 850,000 buys ($47-million) for the December 8 HBO PPV was easily last year's second-largest grossing fight. In both instances, "Money Mayweather" played villain to a pair of mega-popular fighters, but even his dependence on a strong co-star could be starting to change.

Almost lost amid a sea of approximately 7,000 bellicose adults at the Mayweather-Hatton weigh-in, sat a small group of children from a Las Vegas elementary school. Many of them held handmade signs supporting the guy who had gotten them out of the classroom on this Friday afternoon and into the MGM Grand Garden Arena. There was no way the tiny, youthful contingent of Mayweather fans could drown out the passionate Hatton mob, but that didn't stop them from trying. The next night, the roles were reversed, and no amount of noise from Hatton's vociferous followers among the sell-out crowd of 16,459 could help the Englishman in his attempt to upset the school kids' new hero.

By the end of the evening, as his own children gathered around him at the postfight podium, you got the sense that Mayweather was ready to cast aside, or at least loosen his grip on, the black hat he's worn throughout most of his career. True, he's generally dropped his demeaning attitude toward opponents after his arm has been raise in victory, but there seemed to be more genuine warmth than before, a lowering of the guard that allowed the gentler side of Pretty Boy to surface.

Will Mayweather revert to form and threaten to sodomize his next opponent? Perhaps. But a more mature approach, without losing too much of the edge that gives him his undeniable

street cred, certainly wouldn't hurt his crossover appeal.

In professional wrestling, it is not unusual for a "heel" (bad guy) to turn "babyface" (good guy), or, for that matter, a babyface to turn heel. It is a popular device that spices up the scripted, pseudo-sport and keeps the fans guessing. Boxing doesn't work quite the same as its wayward second cousin, but every now and then, the natural order of things transforms a fighter's public persona from one extreme to another. Muhammad Ali went from big-mouthed draft-dodger to national icon, George Foreman from brooding thug to America's favorite fat uncle, Mike Tyson from the baddest man on the planet to sympathetic sad sack.

Mayweather's unfinished transformation has been aided considerably

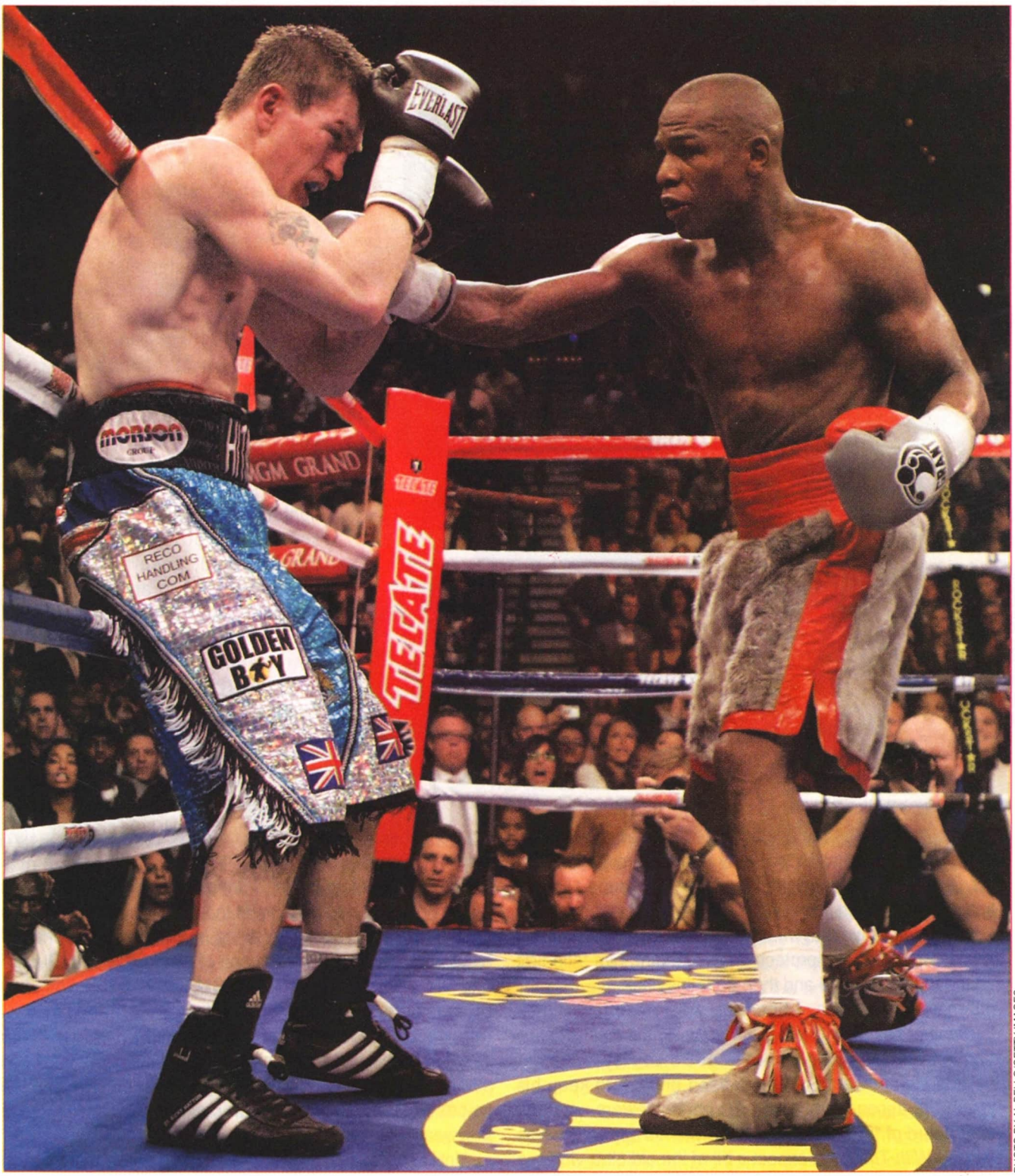
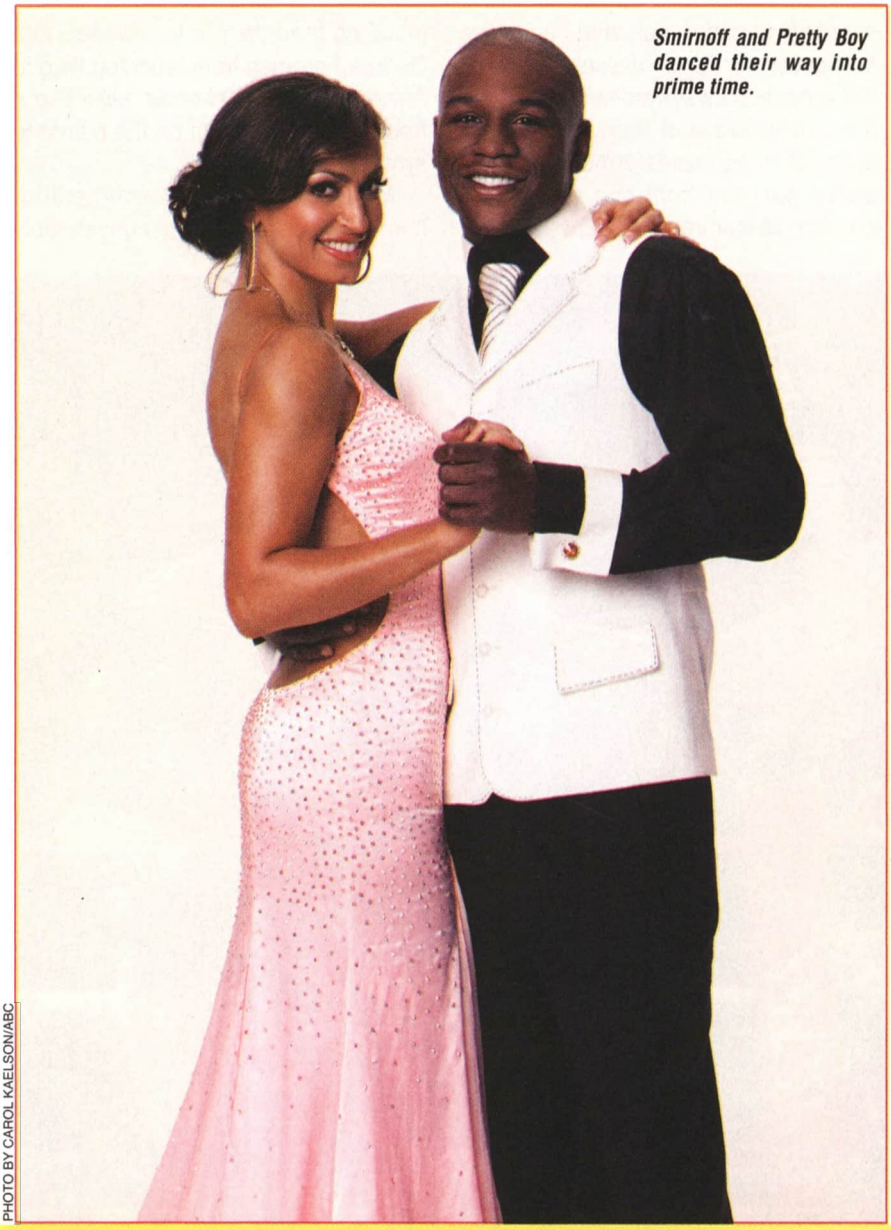


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Mayweather rips into Hatton during the climactic 10th round of their welterweight championship bout at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas. Stung by the criticism leveled at him for his dull decision over Oscar De La Hoya, "Pretty Boy" ended Hatton's challenge with an emphatic knockout.



Smirnoff and Pretty Boy danced their way into prime time.

PHOTO BY CAROL KAELSON/ABC

by a couple of brilliant marketing ploys—his appearance on *Dancing With The Stars* and two starring turns on HBO's *24/7*. Some critics have pointed out the contradiction between his bratty behavior during media tours, and the grinning charmer who tripped the light fantastic with Karina Smirnoff on primetime TV. And they are right. But so far, Floyd has done a pretty good job of navigating the fuzzy gray area between showbiz and boxing.

In a lot of ways, Mayweather's emergence as the new face of boxing has been a matter of being the right boxer at the right time, a fighter who has benefited almost as much from today's materialistic, celebrity-obsessed culture as he does from his athletic brilliance and old-school skills. His self-absorbed style suits the first decade of the 21st century the same way Jack Dempsey's stubble-chinned, tough-guy persona fit the world of 100 years ago.

There is no man for all seasons in boxing, but every age finds a fighter that represents the prevailing sensitivities of the day: Joe Louis, the reserved, pokerfaced pioneer of the late-1930s and '40s; Rocky Marciano, the working man's hero of the Eisenhower Era; Ali, the socially conscience firebrand of the '60s and '70s; Ray Leonard, the Madison Avenue Kid for the consumer-driven

Now Only Mayweather Is "Undefeated"

The great ones have a knack of making it look easy, and the left hook that ended Ricky Hatton's brave bid to win the world welterweight title in the 10th round seemed almost nonchalant in its delivery. Thrown with a saucy swivel of the hips as Floyd Mayweather pivoted, it landed flush on the side of Hatton's unprotected jaw, sending him face-first into the turnbuckle pad and then on to his back.

It may very well have been the most important punch Mayweather has ever thrown. After grabbing the mainstream's attention with his victory over Oscar De La Hoya, another decision victory would not have been enough to keep his star on the ascendancy. Even neophyte viewers who had never heard of "Pretty Boy Floyd" before his appearance on *Dancing With The Stars* expect a bit of the old ultra-violence when they shell out $54.95 to watch pay-per-view boxing. And this time Mayweather delivered, closing the show with the sort of savage flourish that had even hardcore purists singing his praises.

Of course, before Hatton's unequivocal demise, it was his fellow Brits who had done most the singing. The week of the fight, boozy choruses of "Walking In A Hatton Wonderland," augmented by rousing renditions of "God Save The Queen" and "Rule Britannia," filled the MGM Grand and surrounding casinos both day and night. The fervor of Hatton's faithful followers created a contagious din that infused the event with the sort of passion that can lift the spirits, and sometimes the body, to new heights. But, ultimately, the voices of Hatton's countrymen could not compensate for Mayweather's mastery.

Until Mayweather, 147, opened up and hurt Hatton, 145, in the eighth round, it had been an untidy, mauling affair, made even more so by referee Joe Cortez' unwarranted meddling

'80s. So as De La Hoya—the ideal crossover star during the U.S.'s Latino demographic explosion of the late-'90s—fades gradually from the scene, Mayweather is perfectly positioned to assume the role of the sport's standard-bearer.

Some will undoubtedly be uncomfortable with such a brash man-child at the forefront of the Sweet Science, but that could very well be a shortsighted point of view. Times change, and if boxing is to continue to generate income the way it did in '07, somebody has to lead the charge. Right now

PHOTO BY ALL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Mayweather and Cortez watch Hatton crash land in the 10th round

with the flow of the fight. Even the limited success Hatton enjoyed was, to a degree, an optical illusion. Yes, there were a couple of rounds in which his raw aggression and busier work rate could have conceivably given him an edge—all three judges and the RING gave Hatton the fifth. But he never inflicted any real damage.

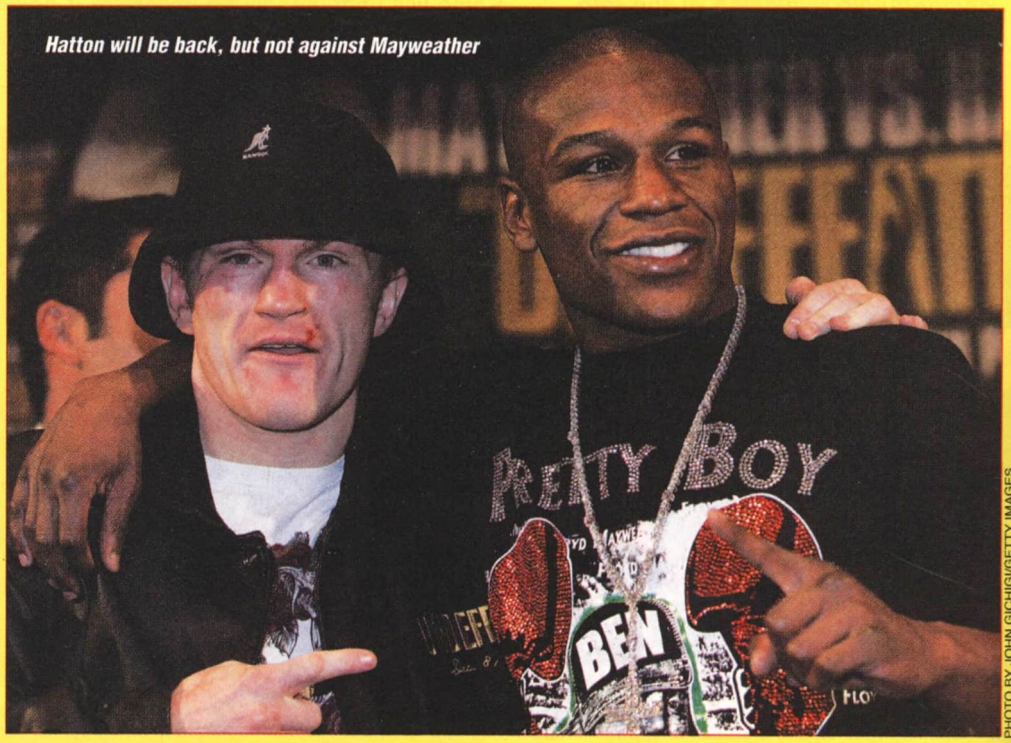
The point Cortez docked Hatton for an ineffectual foul in the sixth round was ultimately inconsequential, and unnecessary, if you subscribe to the no-harm, no-foul theory. The offending blow aimed at the back of Pretty Boy's head was deflected by one of the strands and he flopped partway between the ropes in order to escape one of his adversary's rushes.

Once the champion went on the attack, a tiring Hatton was in deep trouble. In the ninth, Mayweather caught him flush between the eyes with a right, and you could tell it hurt by the look on Ricky's face as he lunged forward and held on. More punishment followed, and by the end of the round Hatton was ready to go, though judging by the way he threw himself back into the fray in the 10th, he probably didn't know it at the time.

Although still dazed, Hatton gallantly beat the count after falling victim to what Mayweather called a "check hook," and braced himself for the inevitable. Mayweather, 39-0 (25), closed like an assassin and sent the Englishman spilling to the floor with another combination just as Hatton's trainer, Billy Graham, tossed a white towel into the ring, prompting Cortez to stop the fight at the 1:35 mark.

—N.C.

Hatton Still The King Of England



Hatton will be back, but not against Mayweather

If there's a fighter today who can lose the biggest fight of his career and not lose a single fan, it's Ricky Hatton, who was serenaded out of the ring after his TKO loss to Floyd Mayweather almost as fervently as when he entered. And the first words out of Ricky's mouth at the postfight press conference proved he still had his wits about him following the maiden defeat of his 43-1 (31) career.

"I was doing all right until I f___ing slipped," cracked Hatton, his scuffed and bruised face adding comic irony to the cheeky remark.

"Ricky Hatton is one hell of a fighter," said Mayweather. "He's as tough as nails. Utmost respect."

The former combatants shared more kind words and hugs, and before Hatton left the stage for a well-earned reunion with Mr. Guinness, his parting shot was true to form. "Ricky Fatton will be back," he said. The big question is against whom.

Actually, Hatton has more attractive options than his conqueror. He's still THE RING junior welterweight champion, and fights with British compatriots Junior Witter and Gavin Rees, both of whom own alphabet belts at 140 pounds, would do big business in the U.K., where SKY-PPV sold the Mayweather fight to 1.2 million homes. A match with Paul Malignaggi would also be appealing, providing the Brooklyn motor mouth successfully defends the IBF junior welter belt against Herman Ngoudjo on January 5 in Atlantic City. But even though a Hatton-Malignaggi fight would probably fill Madison Square Garden, The "Magic Man" might have to pack his headbands and hair dye for a trip cross the Atlantic.

"I have spoken with my dad and we both agree that the time is right and we would like to repay the fans' loyalty with a fight in this country," said Hatton in an open letter to his loyal British fans that was publish in the *Manchester Evening News*.

Before the Mayweather fight, there was talk of a Hatton-Oscar De La Hoya dream match at the new 90,000-seat Wembley Stadium, and although "The Golden Boy" left the door open, the authoritative nature of Mayweather's victory took a layer or two of luster off such a proposition.

Unless it's against De La Hoya, another venture north of 140 pounds wouldn't be worth the risk. From a sporting point of view, giving number-one contender Witter a shot would be the right thing for Hatton to do. But after taking on the best fighter in the world, Ricky has earned the right to fight anybody he wants.

—N.C.

Mayweather is the best candidate, and if his arrogance and braggadocio diminish with maturity, the bottom line will be enhanced along with his popularity.

Not that anybody wants Mayweather to morph into Goody Two-Shoes. A measure of nastiness is always a good thing in a fighter. What is more, even for those who still can't stand his guts and would like nothing better than to see him get knocked into the third row, there is hope. It comes in the form of a fighter who is the antithesis of the extraverted Pretty Boy, a stoic man of quiet dignity and considerable fighting skill—Miguel Cotto, THE RING's number-one welterweight contender.

The unbeaten Puerto Rican embodies many of the traditional values that a significant number of people find lacking in Mayweather. When boxing is going well (and it certainly was on a roll when Mayweather-Hatton closed out a resurgent year for the sport), things like that just happen: Top-shelf fighters, representing different fistic and personal philosophies, become natural rivals and create a canvas larger than a boxing ring. Mayweather-Cotto has that potential.

As far as the overwhelming majority of boxing consumers are concerned,

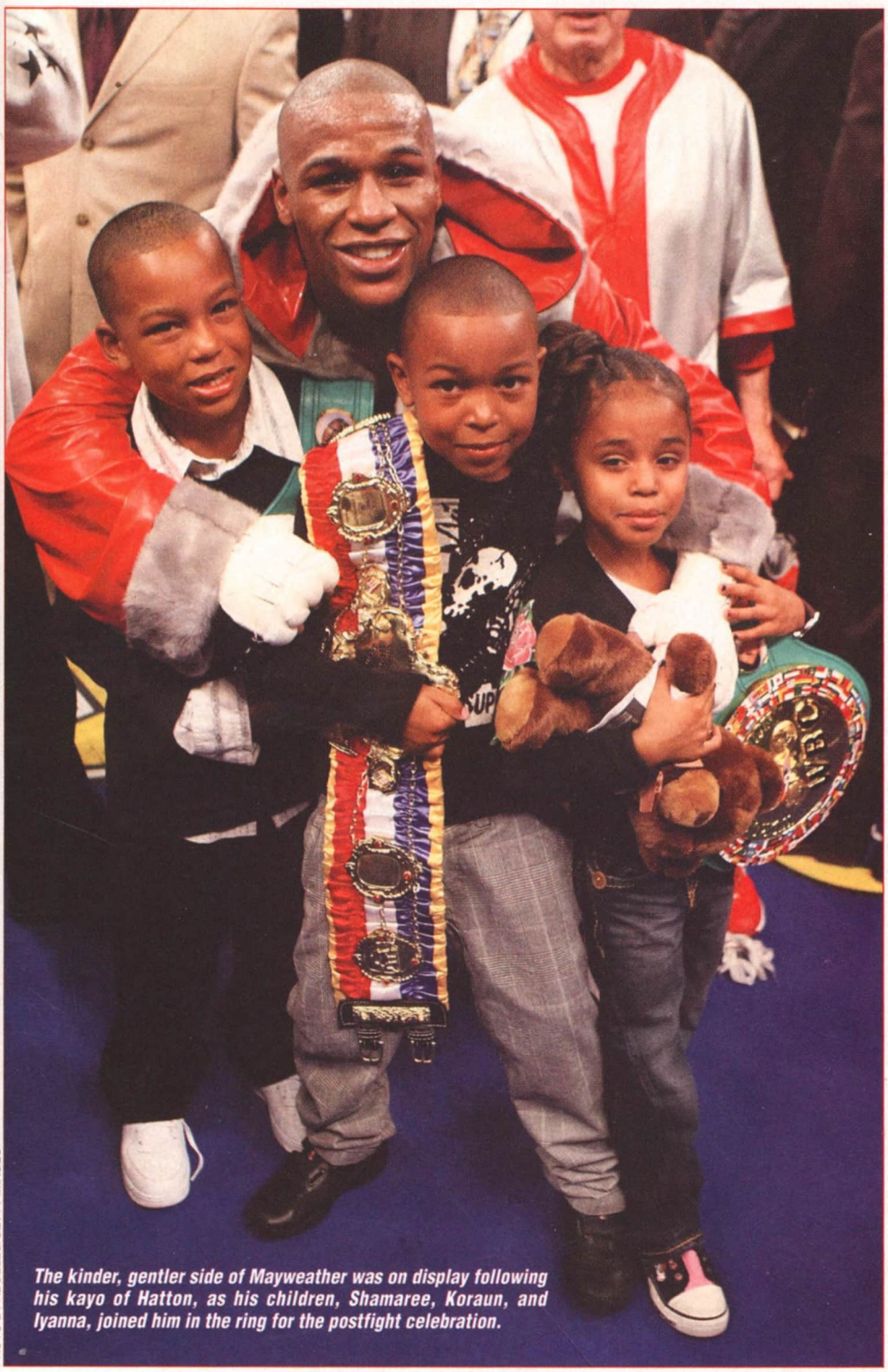
the Mayweather-Cotto match is the one they want to spend their money. Fans responding to ring-online.com poll, asking who our readers wanted to see Mayweather fight next, voted for Cotto by a more than an 85 percent margin. It's a no-brainer really, the best bet among non-De La Hoya matches to crack the million-sales PPV mark.

As has been the case throughout his career, what De La Hoya does has a substantial ripple effect on the rest of boxing. Anybody around his weight can make more money fighting De La Hoya than they can fighting anybody else, and in Cotto's case, a fight with Oscar might be easier too, especially as De La Hoya has expressed a desire to end his career with a couple of stirring slugfests. Mayweather, on the other hand, has articulated no such wish.

If De La Hoya does snatch Cotto away, Mayweather would be left with very little in the way of attractive opponents. There are some decent fighters among THE RING's top-10 welterweights—Paul Williams, Kermit Cintron, Antonio Margarito—but none of them possess anywhere near the Q rating necessary to share the ring with Pretty Boy. Shane Mosley comes close, but after his loss to Cotto, much of the intrigue of a Mayweather fight has evaporated. Yes, Mosley fought Cotto close, but he showed no indication that he still had enough left to beat Mayweather.

No, the only welterweight fight that will advance the cause of boxing is Mayweather-Cotto, and if it doesn't happen, the extended vacation the pound-for-pound king talked about following his 10th-round TKO of Hatton could become much more of a reality than the "retirement" he promised after the De La Hoya fight. But at least there was no crying jag like after the Gatti fight, so progress is being made. Maybe more than we think.

While it certainly would be a bummer if the Mayweather-Cotto fight doesn't happen in a timely manner, if Mayweather ends up fighting a lesser opponent, we'll soon find out just how potent of a punch the new prince of the pay-per-view packs at the box office. If he really is the right boxer at the right time, now is as good a time as any to test the importance of the man in the other corner. If Pretty Boy can score big on the strength of his own appeal, he will have joined an elite club in which De La Hoya is the only other active member. It's where Mayweather figures he should have been all along. ■



The kinder, gentler side of Mayweather was on display following his kayo of Hatton, as his children, Shamaree, Koraun, and Iyanna, joined him in the ring for the postfight celebration.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

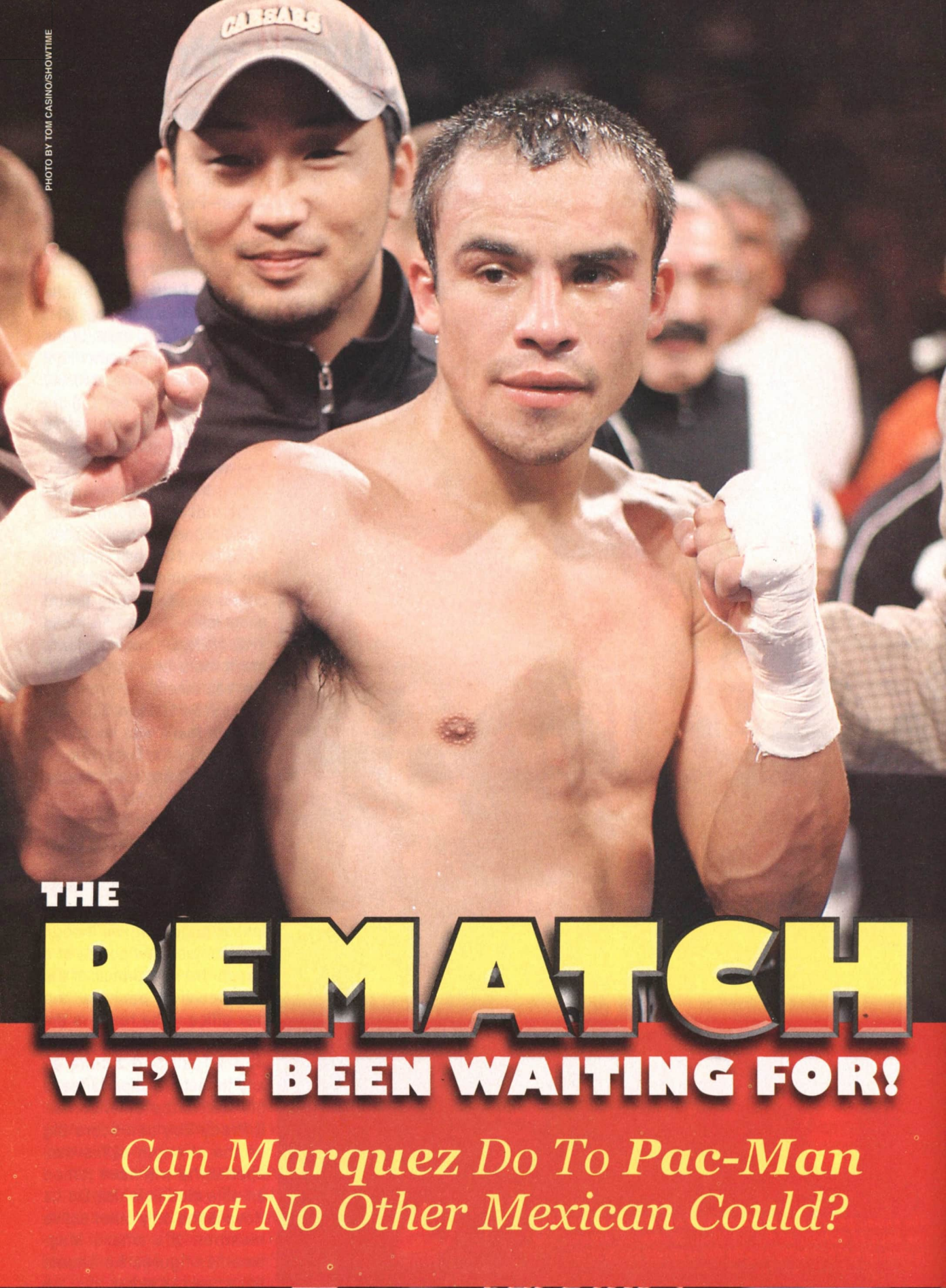


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

THE REMATCH WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR!

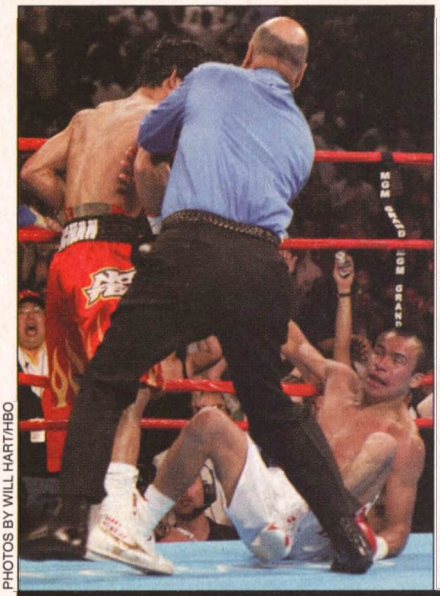
*Can **Marquez** Do To **Pac-Man** What No Other Mexican Could?*

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Manny Pacquiao (below) has throttled some of the best Mexican fighters of this generation, like Erik Morales Marco Antonio Barrera. Juan Manuel Marquez (opposite page) will try to snap that streak when the two meet in a rematch March 15 for THE RING junior lightweight world championship.

By Don Stewart

For all the damage he's done to the Mexican fight game, Manny Pacquiao is probably the most popular non-Mexican fighter in that country. In seven straight bouts, and 10 his last 11, the Filipino slugger has fought a Mexican opponent. He's sent



PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

the beloved Marco Antonio Barrera into retirement, and punched hero Erik Morales to the brink of it.

While Pacquiao's superstardom has come largely at the expense of Mexican fighters, "Pac-Man" doesn't wear that fact on his sleeve as, say, Roger Mayweather once did long before unintentionally cracking us up on HBO's *24/7*. If Mayweather managed to dub himself "The Mexican Assassin" for stringing together some decent wins in the late-'80s, think of what kind of nickname Pacquiao could carry.

But for the most part, Pacquiao has always let his fists speak for themselves. His swarming, aggressive style has helped make him one of the biggest draws in the sport, so there's no need to antagonize anyone to sell tickets. In turn, devoted Mexican fans have actually developed an admiration for the man who has given them so much heartache.

"I think they respect Manny Pacquiao," said Telefutura analyst Bernardo Osuna. "To do what he's done against the best Mexican fighters of his generation speaks to his tenacity. The working man can't help but love Manny Pacquiao. He's not that charmed guy who has had everything handed to him on a platter. He goes out there against guys who are supposedly there to

Marquez got himself into some serious early trouble the first time he met Pacquiao, in May 2004. "Pac-Man" sent Marquez to the canvas three times (top) in the opening round, before Marquez could finally figure out Pacquiao and put him on the defensive (above).

outclass him and comes through every time."

But this is a pride sport, after all, and Mexican fans in particular are fiercely devoted to their own. So never in his career has Juan Manuel Marquez had the chance to win over his countrymen as he will on March 15 at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, where he'll tangle with Pacquiao for THE RING's junior lightweight championship of the world.

It's a sensational matchup, a potential Fight of the Year candidate pitting two of the top three pound-for-pound fighters. And it could take on added meaning in Marquez' native country.

"I am Mexican, and I support Mexicans," said Barrera, who also has a rooting interest as a partner in Golden Boy Promotions. "Manny Pacquiao is a very good friend, but I will come to support Juan Manuel."

While Pacquiao's style has even earned him adoration south of the Rio Grande, Marquez has never developed into a top draw thanks partially to a more clever counter-punching approach that has sometimes turned off Mexican fans. The talented Marquez can be fun to watch, but he's never been the blood-and-guts type warrior Morales and Barrera were for much of their careers.

But perhaps more than his style, Marquez has been held back by a lack of opportunity. While the Pacquiao-Barrera-Morales three-way rivalry dominated the featherweight landscape, Marquez always seemed to be the odd man out. To be fair, some of it was thanks to poor management decisions.

In 2000, he turned down a bout with Naseem Hamed. Barrera wound up stepping in and obliterating the "Prince" in a performance that revived his career. Four years later, Marquez was advised to step away from a rematch with Pacquiao and the $750,000 purse offered by then-promoter Top Rank. Marquez wound up dropping a decision to Chris John in Indonesia for $30,000.

Before finally getting a shot at Barrera last March, Marquez' biggest opportunity came in his first meeting with Pacquiao, back in '04. "Dinamita" looked unready for prime time initially as Pacquiao exploited his early mistakes in scoring three first-round knockdowns.

Pacquiao and Marquez both thought they won their first clash. But since their first fight, Pacquiao has become a much more polished fighter under trainer Freddie Roach, while Marquez has gone 6-1 (2), which included a surprising loss to WBA featherweight titlist Chris John in March 2006.

But Marquez survived, then began to solve Pacquiao after a few rounds. He outboxed Pacquiao down the stretch to earn a 12-round draw in a verdict that could have gone either way.

Now 34, Marquez, 48-3-1 (35), is apparently getting that now-or-never feeling that usually seems to come too late in this sport (see Roy Jones Jr.). When Pacquiao, 45-3-2 (35), was close to moving up to 135 pounds to meet Morales conqueror David Diaz, Marquez agreed to take a smaller cut of the purse to get the deal done.

"For Marquez, this was not about money, no question about it," Golden Boy CEO Richard Schaefer told ESPN.com's Dan Rafael. "It was about him standing up there and showing all the Mexicans that, 'Hey, you know that this guy beat two legends, Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales, but now I'm going to show Pacquiao what Mexican fighters are all about.' That is what motivates him. He knows with a victory over Pacquiao that his name will be considered right there with Morales and Barrera."

It's a historic fight, and not just for nationalistic reasons. The title has been vacant since the institution of THE RING championship policy in 2002. Harold Gomes, who outpointed Paul Jorgensen in 1959, was the last universally recognized 130-pound champ, though the linear title was passed around until Brian Mitchell retired with it in 1991.

"I think it really irks Marquez that he let that first rematch get away over petty conditions that were thrown about," Osuna said. "If he doesn't take this opportunity now, he'll never get this opportunity again. He sees Manny moving up in weight or getting other fights. He wanted to seize the opportunity. You have to do it now because it may be too late, or it may never happen."

But will he seize the moment March 15?

It could come down to which fighter has developed more in the past four years. If that's the case, then it will be a big night for Pacquiao. Under the guidance of trainer Freddie Roach, Pacquiao has grown into more of a multi-dimensional threat, not that he was ever considered strictly one-dimensional at the championship level.

Roach called the first Pacquiao-Marquez clash a "very poor fight" for Pacquiao. After enjoying so much success with his left hand in the opening round, the southpaw Pac-Man relied on it throughout the rest of the fight. Roach said that tact made his fighter an easy target for Marquez' quick counters.

"Marquez is a very good counter-puncher," Roach said. "The first time they fought, Manny was just throwing

the left, and he was countering that shot all night long. I think it was pretty simple for him. He's been a little more aggressive [lately]. I don't know if that's because he's slowing down and can't counter or if he's trying to make himself more marketable."

Though he's coming off decisive 12-round wins against Barrera and Rocky Juarez, Marquez might be at the start of that gradual downslope all fighters reach at some point. His power seems to be a bit diminished from where it was four years ago. As for Marquez' vaunted hand speed, though, it didn't appear to be diminished in his November 3 drubbing of Juarez.

As for Pacquiao, punishment in and out of the ring could be taking its toll on his 29-year-old body. Last April, after facing his share of distractions and training disruptions, he got a tougher-than-expected challenge from previously unbeaten Jorge Solis, who eventually fell in eight. Six months later, Pacquiao won a comfortable decision in his rematch with Barrera, the same fighter he stopped impressively four years earlier.

Part of the blame for Pacquiao's pedestrian performance in the Barrera fight might have been his struggle to make the 130-pound limit. Whether it was a reflection of his motivation heading into a second meeting with a guy he'd already demolished, or simply a failure to properly monitor his weight after moving camp from the Philippines to Los Angeles (as Roach claims), only Pacquiao knows.

There was talk of staging Pacquiao-Marquez II at a catchweight above 130, but the Pacquiao camp decided to take the bout at the junior lightweight limit to ensure it would be for the title. Roach said in early-December that he's planning a 10-week training camp, with the last eight weeks to be held at his Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles.

"Manny won't look past this guy," Roach said. "He knows this is the guy who gave him the hardest fight since he's been in America, along with Agapito Sanchez in 2001. Marquez fought a great fight that night. Manny, I know he respects that. He knows he needs to work really hard for this fight."

While it seems that there's more on the line for Marquez, Pacquiao has plenty at stake despite already being an established superstar. Pac-Man is reportedly looking to meet Diaz for a lightweight belt this summer, then possibly Oscar De La Hoya in the fall.

Barring the unlikelihood of a one-sided blowout, a loss to Marquez wouldn't necessarily derail Pacquiao's plans, but it would knock some luster off his name. And while his focus might be more on dollars than legacy at this point, a draw and a loss to Marquez would certainly affect Pacquiao's standing among the all-time greats.

"The match itself is very dangerous for Manny," said Bruce Trampler, the matchmaker for Pacquiao-promoter Top Rank. "He dropped the guy three times in the first round and had to fight for his life after that. You knock out that first round, and probably Marquez did more than Manny that first time.

"I think it's his most dangerous fight. As for whether it's the right fight, that's Manny's call. He was presented many options, and he selected this one. If he picked Marquez, maybe it was unfinished business. Which is fine. You have to respect that."

So will he gain more respect south of the border by beating another Mexican titlist? When pressed for a prediction, Barrera would only say that he's supporting Marquez, and that Dinamita must go to the body and make better use of his hand speed against the quick Pacquiao. Osuna went a step further.

"I really do like Marquez," he said. "He's coming into this fight with everything. He made all the concessions necessary for this fight. It's a pride fight for Marquez. If he can avoid making the mistakes he made the first time around, I can't see Manny evolving enough in the last four years to overcome Marquez' boxing skills."

It can be argued that Marquez has never really lost a fight; many thought he deserved the nod against Freddie Norwood in 1999, as well as against Pacquiao and John, and his other loss was a bizarre disqualification in his pro debut. Pacquiao has a better right hand than he did four years ago, but he won't be able to match Marquez' speed or savvy.

Pacquiao will pressure Marquez relentlessly and try to make it a brawl. He'll have his moments, and could very well score a knockdown in the middle rounds. But Marquez, who has waited four years for this chance, won't make the same mistakes he did early in the first fight. He'll outwork and outbox Pacquiao to earn a 12-round decision and the biggest win of his career, though it might not be the blood-and-guts type of battle that will endear him to his countrymen or even take him to the next level as a mainstream star. Like many great artists, some fighters just seemed doom to excel without ever breaking through.

But when it's time to talk about legacies and career significance, a win against Pacquiao will mean everything for Marquez.

"It would definitely validate what he and many in the boxing world believe, that he was on par with Morales and Barrera but never got the chances that they got," Osuna said. "Doing what they couldn't do to Manny Pacquiao would validate his career."

And maybe salvage some Mexican pride. ■

Barrera is familiar with both Marquez and Pacquiao. The Mexican legend lost to each one in 2007. Marquez opened his '07 campaign with a brilliant, tough decision over Barrera in March (opposite page). Pac-Man later sent Barrera into retirement after their rematch in October (left). While Barrera considers himself a close friend of Pacquiao's, he says he is a stronger supporter of Marquez.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

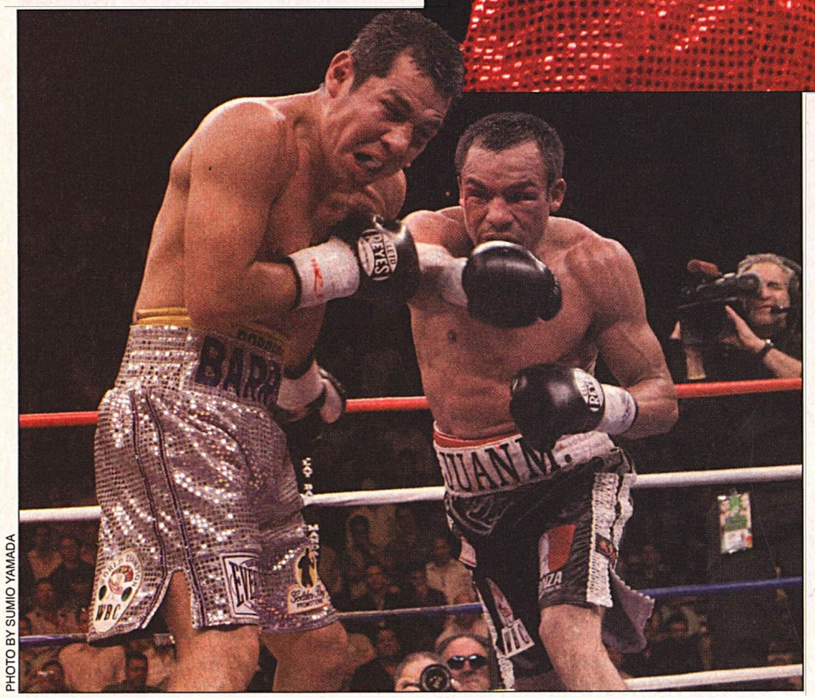


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

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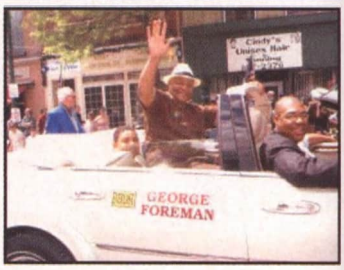


Hooray . . . George Foreman enjoys fans along parade route.

BOOK SIGNINGS

Hall of Fame referee Arthur Mercante signs his autobiography for the fans.

MUSEUM GROUNDS

Autographs . . . "Sweet Pea" Pernell Whitaker spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

5K RACE, FUN RUN

Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

INDUCTION CEREMONY

A Moment in Time . . . Proudly draped in Panamanian flag, Duran delivers induction speech.

BOXING CARD SHOW

A Collector's Dream . . . Boxing memorabilia for fans. The world's only all-boxing show draws collectors from throughout the world.

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

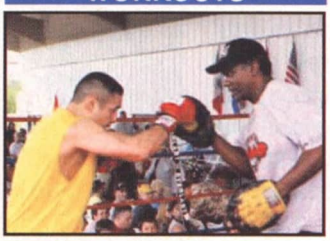
COCKTAIL PARTY

Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM

Ricardo Lopez points to his championship trunks.

WORKOUTS



Oscar Diaz works the bag mitts with Tommy Brooks during public workout.

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YEAR-END SPECTACULAR

THE BEST OF 2007

Compiled by Nigel Collins, Joe Santoliquito, Eric Raskin, Don Stradley, and Don Stewart

You can always tell it's been a great year for boxing when selecting the winners for our annual awards is almost as much of a struggle for the editors as the Fight of the Year candidates were for the fighters. And in 2007, there were no quick knockouts, just hours of discussion and debate before finally deciding on who and what comprised the best of the best.

Every year features at least a handful of great fights, but they do not always translate into a box-office bonanzas. In 2007, however, the business end of the sport also experienced a banner year. In fact, HBO Pay-Per-View had its most lucrative year ever, with a total of 4.8 millions buys, generating $255-million in revenue.

The upswing was not limited to the United States: Canadian boxing is experiencing a significant comeback, with crowds in excess of 10,000 turning out on a regular basis in Montreal. The U.K. is also on the midst of a massive renaissance, and Eastern Europe, especially Germany, continues to be fertile ground for the Sweet Science. Even Sweden and Turkey, where professional boxing was illegal for decades, have lifted the ban and held cards. Then there's Asia and Latin America, two gigantic geographical areas where boxing is still considered a major sport.

None of this, however, would be possible without the top fighters' willingness to fight one another. History has proven that fans quickly tire of supporting so-called appearance fights, and will spend their discretionary income on other forms of entertainment if quality matches are not made. In many ways, the best fighting the best was the key to last year's boxing revival, and if the industry wants to keep the turnstile spinning in '08, the same recipe will have to be followed over the next 12 months.

While most of the sport flourished in '07, the heavyweight division remained a sore spot. It's a weight class with no legitimate world champion, populated by a lackluster collection of alphabet titleholders and wannabes. Still, as most readers of THE RING already know, men in the lower-weight classes traditionally provide the best action. In fact, no heavyweight has been chosen as THE RING's Fighter of the Year since 1997, and in order to find the big boys involved in the Fight of the Year, you have to go back even further. So on top of everything else, 2007 proved that the "as the heavyweights go, so goes boxing" cliché is as bogus as Tye Fields' kayo percentage.

FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

FLOYD MAYWEATHER

He could stand in the eye of a hurricane and it wouldn't even ruffle the fur on his chinchilla pants. His defense is so tight that if boxing had a Vezina trophy, he'd win it every year. At times his personality distracts from what he really is: an old-school boxing maestro with more slick moves than Jersey Joe Walcott. But not only did his bulletproof style help him win a pair of high-profile fights in 2007—Floyd Mayweather also invaded the mainstream with surprising success. There he was on talk shows, dance shows, Hollywood gossip shows, and reality shows. All that's left for Mayweather is to appear in his own comic strip. For all of these reasons, Floyd Mayweather has been chosen as THE RING's 2007 Fighter of the Year.

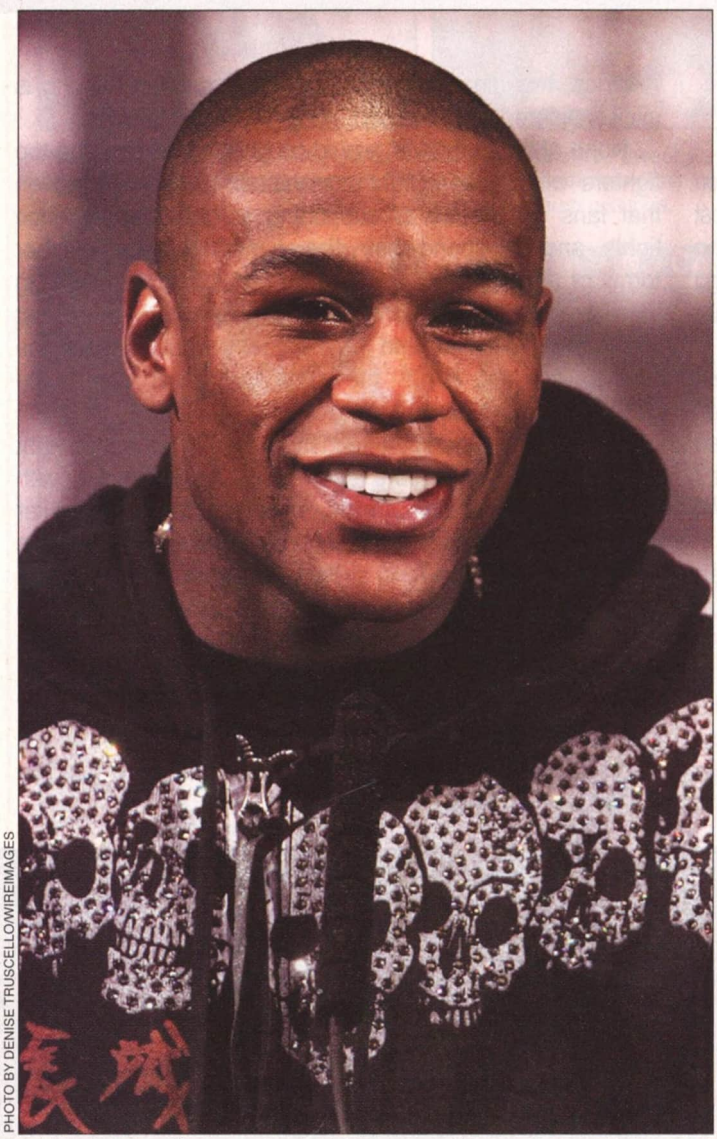


PHOTO BY DENISE TRUSCELLO/WIREIMAGES

What is it about *Dancing With The Stars* that attracts fighters? First it was Evander Holyfield, then Laila Ali, and now Mayweather. Whether it was a genuine desire to show his dance moves, or a chance to hobnob with third-tier celebrities like Wayne Newton and Marie Osmond, Mayweather worked as hard for the ABC show as he does for his fights. He may overestimate what the show will do for his career, but there was no missing the smile on Mayweather's face as he warmed himself in the spotlight. In his mind, he finally had crossover appeal. Granted, a turn on *Dancing With The Stars* doesn't exactly put him in the Michael Jordan category, but Mayweather has become boxing's unlikeliest ambassador.

Of course, Mayweather's mainstream efforts would mean nothing without success in the ring. In that regard he was mighty fine in 2007. In May he shared the spotlight with Oscar De La Hoya in the year's most widely hyped contest. That the fight was a disappointment in terms of action nearly overshadowed Mayweather's accomplishment: He defeated the most famous fighter of the decade and barely broke a sweat. In December, Mayweather stopped the previously unstoppable Ricky Hatton. As if to make up for the lack of excitement against De La Hoya, Mayweather fought hard against Hatton. He ended matters with a left hook from hell that sent Hatton bouncing around the ring like a pinball. It was one of those finishes that brought Sugar Ray Robinson to mind, a perfect punch that seemed to erupt out of the ether. It was a fitting apogee to a career year.

Honorable Mention

Middleweight champion **Kelly Pavlik** was a strong candidate for Fighter of the Year. He started 2007 with a crushing knockout of Jose Luis Zertuche. In May he took on the powerful Edison Miranda. He was fully expected to lose, but he absorbed "El Pantera's" best shots and kayoed him in seven. In September Pavlik journeyed to Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City to face champion Jermain Taylor. After surviving a violent knockdown in round two, Pavlik bashed away until Taylor fell in the seventh. Pavlik's shy smirk, his Youngstown, Ohio, roots, and his exciting style make him a welcome addition to boxing's revolving door of superstars.

Miguel Cotto's popularity continued to rise in 2007. In March he kayoed veteran Oktay Urkal in Puerto Rico, and in June Cotto stopped Zab Judah in front of a soldout Madison Square Garden. Cotto's year climaxed by beating Shane Mosley by decision, also in New York. Against Judah he brawled; against Mosley he boxed. Cotto did a bit of everything in 2007.

Super middleweight champion **Joe Calzaghe** made believers of us again in 2007. He did it by outpointing tough and talented Mikkel Kessler in front of 50,000 fans at Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, Wales. The highly anticipated showdown was the talk of Europe for many months. In beating Kessler, Calzaghe showed why he belongs on any pound-for-pound list. Prior to beating Kessler, Calzaghe stopped Peter Manfredo in three. Calzaghe remains undefeated in 44 contests.

Lightweight **Juan Diaz** put us all on notice in 2007. He whipped Acelino Freitas in eight rounds, and then stopped Julio Diaz in nine. A few years ago we weren't sure what "The Baby Bull" could do. Now we're not sure if there's anything he can't do.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Pavlik became the new world middleweight champion in 2007

Could we overlook any fighter who had defeated De La Hoya and Hatton in the same 12-month period? Of course not. If he'd beaten Hatton by dull decision, we'd probably still have chosen Mayweather. The fact that he bombed Hatton made the choice even easier.

Mayweather's critics will say these fights were financial successes only because he had two incredibly popular opponents. There's some truth there. But is there another welterweight in the world who could've drawn the same numbers with Ricky and Oscar? It was Mayweather's ability to sell these fights that turned them into "events." Mayweather understands that hype is a necessary evil. This year he played the buffoon, the villain, and the arrogant millionaire. He even donned a little toy crown to wear at

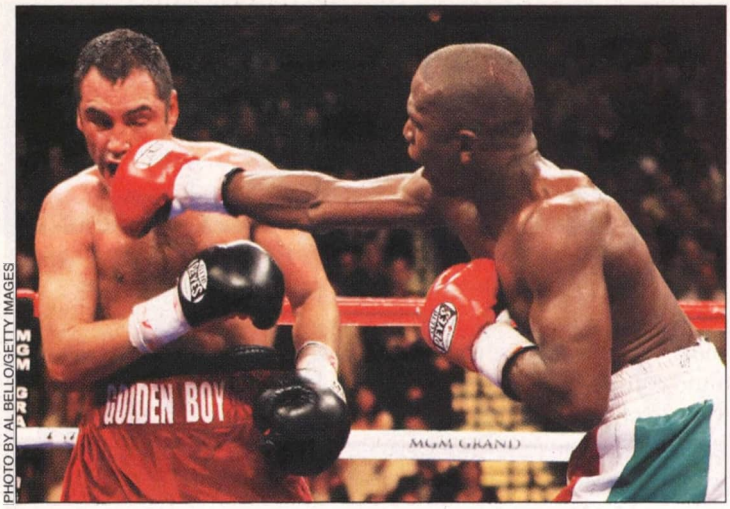


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Mayweather drives a right hand into the face of De La Hoya during the largest-grossing fight in boxing history, which "Pretty Boy" won via 12-round decision.

a press conference. Like Muhammad Ali before him, no promotional stunt is too ridiculous, no insult too bodacious, as long as it puts asses in seats.

Each of Mayweather's 2007 bouts were profiled by HBO's *24/7*. It was Mayweather's willingness to milk his family troubles that turned the show into must-see TV. It was as if he was saying, "My skills aren't enough to interest you? Well, how about my screwed-up family? I'll do whatever it takes to sell tickets, baby." Yes, exploiting one's family for commercial purposes is tacky, but these are tacky times. Mayweather could be the perfect champion for an era that will be remembered for uncouth celebrities, reality TV, and self-conscious raunch.

This is the second time Mayweather has been chosen as THE RING's Fighter of the Year, the first being in 1998, an incredible nine years ago. While many fighters have been named Fighter of the Year more than once, only four—Ray Robinson, Muhammad Ali, Evander Holyfield, and James Toney—have won with so many years in between awards. This is a tribute to Mayweather's constant level of excellence.

Mayweather is a rarity, a wunderkind who didn't burn out early. If possible, he's improved since 1998. He was a pup back then, a brash loudmouth who was brilliant, even if his personality was grating. Now, he's a veteran, still loud, and still brilliant. If he's still grating, we're used to it. We probably wouldn't want him any other way. ■

Floyd Mayweather: The Year That Was

Despite his talk of being bored with the sport, Mayweather is now the face of boxing. When magazines like ***Forbes*** *and* ***Sports Illustrated*** *do their year-end salary lists, Mayweather's name will be at or near the top; he made approximately 50 million bucks in 2007 for two fights. That will get people, and other athletes, talking about boxing for a change.*

One of the keys to Mayweather's success was that he didn't waste a lot of time haggling over contracts and complaining that the press wasn't treating him fairly. He wasn't a whining brat this year. Instead, he focused on selling tickets, selling his name, and selling his talent. It was this hairline change in attitude that finally made him into a star. He's become a Floyd Mayweather we can get behind.

His bout with De La Hoya was referred to by some as "the fight to save boxing." Boxing doesn't need saving, but it occasionally needs an injection of adrenaline. This year that injection was administered by Mayweather.

W 12 Oscar De La Hoya, Las Vegas, Nevada, May 5, 2007: "The World Awaits" was the bombastic title affixed to the event by Golden Boy Promotions. There'd been some speculation that Mayweather might wilt underneath the massive spotlight mounted for this fight, but with the eyes of the world upon him, Mayweather remained unflappable. In fact, it was De La Hoya who seemed unsure of himself, flailing like an amateur when he had Mayweather cornered. De La Hoya started out well, but gradually he lost steam and focus. That always happens to Mayweather's opponents. As his fight plan unraveled, Oscar found himself an easy target for Mayweather's right leads. De La Hoya made a valiant effort in the last round, but it wasn't enough.

The MGM Grand held 16,700 on this night, and there were over 25,000 closed-circuit tickets sold. But the real story was the $134.4-million generated by pay-per-view buys. It was a grand night for boxing, financially if not artistically. Judge Chuck Giampa scored the bout 116-112 for Mayweather, while Jerry Roth gave it to Mayweather 115-113. Tom Kaczmarek saw it for De La Hoya, 115-113. The split decision win gave Mayweather the WBC super welterweight belt to go along with the world welterweight championship he won from Carlos Baldomir.

Mayweather did just enough to win, as if he was concerned about making a mistake in front of a huge audience. Yes, it was a low-risk performance, but Mayweather, as smart a fighter as there has ever been, had correctly calculated that he could beat De La Hoya without taking chances. The biggest risk he took was in alienating casual fans who might not have appreciated the subtlety of his slippery style.

KO 10 Ricky Hatton, Las Vegas, Nevada, December 8, 2007: Like all fighters who dream of pressuring

PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Mayweather beats Hatton to the punch

Mayweather into submission, England's Hatton spent several rounds grinding away, keeping Mayweather off-balance. Hatton had some good moments, but his all-out attack was hard to sustain. Gradually, Hatton wore himself out. Trying to corner Mayweather is like trying to capture a greased pig. Fighters grow frustrated and become easy pickings. It's Ali's Rope-a-Dope taken to a more exacting level.

Much of the fight was a tangle of arms and elbows, but Mayweather was gritty enough to handle Hatton's rough style. Hatton had a point deducted in the sixth for trying to whack Mayweather on the back of the head; a frustrated Hatton complained that Mayweather was fighting with his back turned. The truth was that Hatton's fight plan was too one-dimensional to beat a modern master like Mayweather. By the eighth round Hatton was fatigued, while Mayweather was crouching like a jungle cat poised to strike, lashing out with right leads that snapped Hatton's head back.

The 16,459 customers at the MGM Grand, mostly Britons who'd crossed the Atlantic to see their man try his luck, continued chanting Hatton's theme song, even as Mayweather was taking control. In the 10th, Hatton made one last Kamikaze charge at Mayweather only to be caught with a stunning left hook. The blow knocked Hatton face-first into a corner post. Hatton ricocheted off, and crashed to the canvas. Gamely, Hatton rose on unsteady legs, but Mayweather unloaded a flurry of hard punches and dropped him a second time. With Hatton down and dazed, referee Joe Cortez stopped the bout at 1:35 of the 10th. Mayweather's record stands at 39-0 (25).

FIGHT OF THE YEAR

ISRAEL VAZQUEZ KO 6 RAFAEL MARQUEZ

Fight-game purists longing for a return to the original eight weight classes, or least some contraction from the current 17-division mess, might want to leave the junior featherweights alone. Since their arrival in the late-1970s, few groups, if any, have produced as many memorable fights as the 122-pounders.

The junior featherweight division gave us both the year's best bout and best round in 2006 (Somsak Sithchatchawal-Mahyar Monshipour) and in 2000 (Marco Antonio Barrera-Erik Morales I). Kennedy McKinney's stoppage of Welcome Ncita was the top knockout of 1992. The Wilfredo Gomez-Lupe Pintor (1982) and Juan Meza-Jaime Garza (1984) fights included the top rounds for their respective years.

In August, the two best 122-pounders in the world, Israel Vazquez and Juan Manuel Marquez, added to the short but distinguished history of the division with an action-packed battle on Showtime that had everything you want in a classic. The Mexico City rivals went right at each other from the opening bell and barely paused for breath. The only thing that was missing was an audience, as the fight was staged at a half-filled Dodge Arena in Hidalgo, Texas, on the same night as the Morales-David Diaz pay-per-view.

In March, Marquez had moved up from bantamweight and taken Vazquez' world junior featherweight title in a brawl that ended after seven rounds, when Vazquez could no longer breathe through his busted nose. Perhaps questioning Vazquez' heart, and more likely angered over his opponent blaming the loss on the injury, Marquez started the rematch more aggressively.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Vazquez cracks Marquez with a wicked left hook

The stinging jab that had been used so effectively five months earlier for Marquez was abandoned for an assortment of hooks to the body and head. Meanwhile, Vazquez also started faster than he did in the first fight. The result was beautiful havoc as the two ripped into each other. With Marquez neglecting the jab, Vazquez had a much easier time working his way inside, where the two willingly traded powershots to the head and body.

Any thought of defense was lost in an unforgettable third round that twice saw a hurt Marquez fall

Honorable Mention

In a resurgent year for boxing, the fight that might have done the most to bolster the sport came in September when **Kelly Pavlik** stopped **Jermain Taylor** to lift the world middleweight crown. Taylor scored a knockdown in the second and seemed one punch away from keeping his title. Pavlik, the blue-collar hero from the Rust Belt, survived to score a thrilling knockout in the seventh, compliments of a perfect right hand.

The month of July saw the fall of Arturo Gatti, and possibly the rise of his blood-and-guts successor. Australian lightweight contender **Michael Katsidis** stole the show on the Bernard Hopkins-Winky Wright undercard with his gory 12-round win against **Czar Amonsot**. Despite spilling blood from a serious cut over his left eye throughout the fight, Katsidis scored two knockdowns in a thrilling battle that likely ended Amonsot's career due to a brain bleed.

The third season of *The Contender* produced a memorable scrap in its finale that made up for a season of not-so-memorable fights. After a first round in which both men hit the deck, super middleweight **Sakio Bika** eventually wore down **Jaidon Codrington** in a give-and-take battle before scoring an eighth-round knockout.

In June, welterweights **Miguel Cotto** and **Zab Judah** did not disappoint a packed Madison Square Garden or their sizeable pay-per-view audience. In a bout that saw both fighters cut, Cotto weathered some tough early rounds to eventually break down Judah and stay unbeaten with an 11th-round stoppage.

Junior bantamweights don't always produce fireworks, but 115-pounders **Fernando Montiel** and **Luis Melendez** produced one of the year's best clashes in October. Cut throughout, badly staggered in the third and dropped in the seventh, Montiel scored a knockdown in the sixth and eventually stopped Melendez on a bodyshot in the 12th.

Though the rematch would overshadow their first meeting back in March, **Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez I** was an exciting slugfest in its own right. The two traded throughout, with Vazquez scoring a knockdown in round three before surrendering at the end of seven with a badly broken nose.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Cotto engages Judah in a welterweight thriller

Two weeks after his brother won the junior featherweight crown, junior lightweight **Juan Manuel Marquez** decisioned **Marco Antonio Barrera** for the biggest win of his career. The entertaining 12-rounder was somewhat marred by ref Jay Nady, who incorrectly ruled that Marquez slipped on a seventh-round knockdown, then took a point away from Barrera for hitting Marquez while he was down.

March was a great month for brawls. The best fight to air on ESPN2 in 2007 was an action-packed eight-rounder between veteran super middleweight **Darrell Woods** and prospect **Samuel Miller**. Despite being badly hurt in the first, seventh, and eighth, Woods took a majority decision with the help of two knockdowns.

The best fight of the packed Floyd Mayweather-Ricky Hatton weekend in December turned out to be middleweight **Enrique Ornelas**' fifth-round stoppage of veteran **Bronco McKart** on Telefutura. Ornelas got up from knockdowns in the first and second to drop McKart in the fourth and fifth before McKart's corner threw in the towel, later claiming their fighter had ruptured both eardrums.

into the ropes, only to stun Vazquez with counters. Both fighters were cut in the round, with Vazquez suffering the worst damage. The third proved to be a pivotal round for Vazquez, though, as Marquez seemed to fade from the fourth round on.

With Vazquez' deep cuts becoming more serious in the sixth, Marquez dropped his right hand as Vazquez punched to the body. Vazquez quickly fired a left hook into the opening. Marquez hit the floor. He bounced up quickly, then got off some counters as Vazquez flurried to end it, but referee Guadalupe Garcia stepped in as Marquez was stumbling toward a corner.

The stoppage was perhaps a bit premature, especially given Marquez' history of fighting through trouble, but it did nothing to take away from an incredible fight. If anything, Garcia's intervention only added fuel for the rubber match, which is scheduled for March 1.

We can't wait. ■

ROUND OF THE YEAR

ISRAEL VAZQUEZ-RAFAEL MARQUEZ II, ROUND 3

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Marquez nails Vazquez during the sizzling rematch between the two junior featherweights

There wasn't a knockdown or a surprise ending or a controversial ploy by a hurt fighter in the third round of the second meeting between Israel Vazquez and Rafael Marquez. Really, there was nothing that complex about those three minutes. No, it was just the top two junior featherweights on the planet beating the hell out of each other from bell to bell. Simple, but beautiful.

After two brutal, back-and-forth rounds, Vazquez entered the third with a cut above his nose, while Marquez already had swelling around both eyes. The two started the round in the center of the ring, with Marquez thumping his potent jab. Vazquez worked his way inside, where the two slugged it out to the body. Relatively speaking, it was a calm before the proverbial storm.

Then, 32 seconds into the round, all hell broke loose. Marquez had bent over from a left to the body, then dropped his right hand a bit as he came up. Vazquez made him pay for it. He landed a hard left hook to the chin that was similar to the shot that floored Marquez in their first meeting five months before. The defending champ tumbled backward into the ropes and away from Vazquez' followup bombs, then grabbed his opponent around the waist. It was one of the few times referee Guadalupe Garcia had to break the two apart.

The two quickly returned to the center of the ring, where Vazquez came forward winging hooks at Marquez' head. But Marquez showed incredible poise in standing his ground and landing some hard left-handed counters that caught Vazquez' attention. Vazquez began going to the body and he managed to drive Marquez into the ropes in the process.

But Marquez landed a hard left hook to the body, then came upstairs with a flush left hook to the chin. Vazquez' knees buckled for a moment, but, incredibly, he blocked Marquez' followup hooks and came forward again. Vazquez landed a right hand and a left hook, then ate a

Honorable Mention

While several of the 13 rounds **Israel Vazquez** and **Rafael Marquez** fought in 2007 could be considered a Round of the Year candidate, the fourth round of their August rematch was just a shade less exciting than the electric third. Vazquez appeared to have Marquez hurt early and midway through the round, only to have Marquez rally late.

The top runner-up this year, though, was the thrilling opening round of *The Contender* finale between **Sakio Bika** and **Jaidon Codrington**. Bika scored a quick knockdown 35 seconds into the fight, then went down from a counter left hook seconds later as he flurried to end it. Bika got up and looked to be out on his feet, but he came back to stagger Codrington a couple of times before the bell and eventually score an eighth-round knockout.

The second round of February's **Michael Katsidis-Graham Earl** lightweight bout in London saw Earl hit the deck early. Just as Earl's corner tossed in the towel, their man stunned the brawling Aussie, forcing a standing-eight count. Katsidis recovered and again had Earl hurt at the end of the round. He went on to win via fifth-round TKO.

It was overshadowed by his unforgettable win against Jermain Taylor for the middleweight title, but **Kelly Pavlik**'s stoppage of **Edison Miranda** four months earlier was a pretty decent scrap. The back-and-forth second round saw both fighters wobbled.

James Kirkland and **Allen Conyers** might not be the most skilled fighters out there, and no one cared in November when the two went right after each other in their *ShoBox* clash. After going down from a right hand 28 seconds into the fight, Kirkland recovered to drop Conyers twice and stop him four seconds before the end of the opening round.

A pair of ESPN2-televised bouts also produced memorable rounds. The wild second round of August's matchup between unbeaten lightweights **Luis Hernandez** and **Jesus Pabon** saw Hernandez score an early knockdown, Pabon get two points deducted for hitting his opponent in the back of the head after a slip, Pabon drop Hernandez with a left hook, then Hernandez level Pabon for the count just seconds after getting up. In March, veteran middleweight **Darrell Woods** dropped prospect **Samuel Miller** in the opening seconds of the third, but then found himself holding on for dear life after walking into a counter right hand. Woods went on to capture an eight-round majority decision.

PHOT BY EMIL HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Bika (left) has Codrington in trouble against the ropes

right to the face as the two traded off the ropes.

Marquez connected with a left hook to the chin and a right to the head as he pushed Vazquez back to center ring. The two dug in and traded again at close range, where Vazquez was most effective throughout the fight. Vazquez quickly landed a right uppercut, then a left uppercut to the chin, and Marquez again appeared to be in trouble.

He backpedaled into the ropes, where Vazquez landed a solid right hand to the face. But Marquez spun off the ropes, then came forward throwing punches. Though still stalking, Vazquez finally appeared to be slowing down with a minute to go in the round. He ate some long jabs and right hands as Marquez re-established his distance.

Marquez backed into the ropes and took a right to the face. But he ducked under a left hook, then unleashed a five-punch combo that staggered Vazquez. With Vazquez backing off, Marquez ripped off another three-punch combo, then winged several unanswered shots at his opponent's head.

Vazquez quickly collected himself, though, before landing a double right hand that drove Marquez into the ropes. Marquez came forward, only to take a one-two to the head. The two traded along the ropes for the final seven seconds of the round, with Vazquez slamming home one final right hand to the chin. Garcia had to jump between the two as the bell sounded. Vazquez nearly followed Marquez to his corner.

Those three savage minutes left Vazquez with deep cuts over both eyes, while Marquez bled from under his swollen right eye. Not only was it the best round in a fight that didn't have a bad round, but it also proved to be a pivotal three minutes. Marquez began to slow down after the third, leading to Vazquez regaining the title with a sixth-round knockout.

It was simply incredible. ■

KNOCKOUT OF THE YEAR

NONITO DONAIRE KO 5 VIC DARCHINYAN

Some knockouts seem like carefully planned executions. Other knockouts seem to be the result of lucky punches thrown in desperation. Both types are entertaining. We like the well-crafted knockout, and we like the Hail Mary punch thrown with closed eyes. Sometimes, in the heat of battle, we can't even tell the difference. Things happen so quickly in a boxing ring that we can't always be sure if a fighter is setting traps, or just trying to survive. Nonito Donaire's fifth-round knockout of Vic Darchinyan was a hybrid of both types of knockout. It was sudden, yet deliberate.

At the time it looked as if Darchinyan had simply walked carelessly into a left hook, a typical mistake by a brawler, but Donaire had been landing that punch since round one. Sometimes it landed on Darchinyan's cheek, or it would glance off his forehead. Darchinyan didn't seem to worry about it; he kept walking in trying to land some thunder of his own. When you can punch as hard as Darchinyan, you don't worry about the other guy.

Then, like a bolt from the blue, Donaire's left hook finally landed on the money spot. Darchinyan had been

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Donaire admires his handiwork

Honorable Mention

Darnell Wilson's savage knockout of **Emmanuel Nwodo** was the sort of kayo that draws a mixed reaction from people. For some, it was what makes boxing great. For others, it was sickening. After 10 bloody rounds, Wilson finally backed up a weary Nwodo and belted him with a left to the jaw that put Nwodo down and out in the 11th. Nwodo's legs folded up underneath him in the sort of grotesque position that we haven't seen since the days of Joe Louis' Bum of the Month Club. Nwodo was down for several minutes before being revived. The knockout was a popular YouTube clip, and may have turned "The Ding-A-Ling Man" into boxing's newest cult hero.

It was supposed to be a meeting of two of the welterweight division's biggest punchers, but **Kermit Cintron** was the only one punching when he blitzed **Walter Matthysse** in two rounds in July, dropping him three times before the bout was stopped.

English heavyweight **Michael Sprott** scored a shocking kayo of former British Olympian **Audley Harrison**. Sprott had been decked in the first round, but a booming left hook from Sprott ended the bout dramatically in the third.

In August, **Ulises Solis** survived a few rough rounds to retain his IBF junior flyweight title with a tremendous one-punch knockout of **Rodel Mayol**.

Junior welter **Harrison Cuello** had been kayoed in his previous bout, so his third-round knockout of **Edgar Santana** at New York's Hammerstein Ballroom in June must've been extra satisfying. He did it with a left hand in the third round.

New York was also the location for featherweight **Andres Ledesma**'s fifth-round kayo of **Gary Stark Jr**. Miami journeyman Ledesma had been staggered in the third before landing his own knockout shot, a hard right to the head.

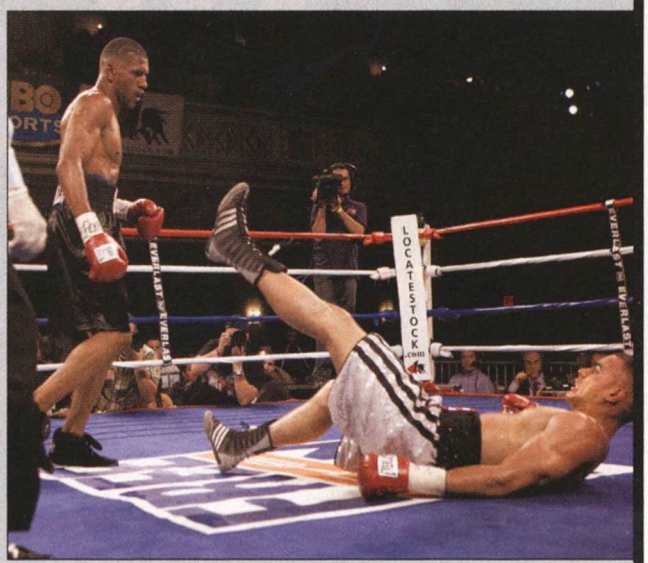


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Cuello sends Santana to the canvas

It's always special when a championship trades hands on a knockout, which is what happened when **Kelly Pavlik** scored a seventh-round stoppage of **Jermain Taylor**. That Pavlik came up from the canvas to do it made it even better. Taylor crumbled in the corner, as if the weight of the middleweight championship, as well as Pavlik's punches, had become too much to bear.

Robert Guerrero needed only 56 seconds to dispatch challenger **Martin Honario**, as he retained his IBF portion of the featherweight title with a vicious stoppage. He used a right-handed jab to set up a wicked left. Both he and Pavlik are nicknamed "Ghost," but there was nothing ghostly about their punching power in 2007. They were definitely flesh and bone.

trying to land one of his bludgeoning shots, and Donaire quickly stepped in and scored with his own punch. The blow landed on Darchinyan's chin, the spot where a man's circuitry seems to connect to his brain. The result was that the Aussie came apart in slow motion.

Darchinyan's legs went first. He sank slowly to the canvas, as if he were back home on some Australian beach, feeling around for a soft spot in the sand. He fumbled on his hands and knees for a moment, only to pitch forward, crushing his nose on the canvas and bloodying himself. Donaire's left hook had been bad enough, but the nosedive into the mat was the perfect followup, as if invisible hands were helping Donaire. Separated from his senses, Darchinyan rose to his feet at the count of seven, but his legs were still uncooperative. He stumbled into the ropes and floundered there as his trainer, Billy Hussein, came to his rescue. Referee Eddie Claudio stopped the fight at the 1:38 mark.

Donaire, now the IBF flyweight titlist, ran around the ring as if he'd just won a lottery prize. His exuberance was well earned; fighting a rugged pug like Darchinyan is a tough order. Donaire's promoter, Gary Shaw, advised him to calm down and not celebrate so much, because it looked as if Darchinyan might be seriously hurt. Donaire understood what was going on. He's a classy little guy who wouldn't think of celebrating while an opponent was being stretchered out.

Fortunately, Darchinyan didn't require much medical attention. Within a few minutes he was back to being his old cocky self. But as Darchinyan exited the ring, he asked Hussein to describe the punch that had ended his IBF title reign. Hussein politely told him it was a left hook. But it had been much more than that. He'd been the victim of a perfect blueprint knockout.

It wasn't the scariest knockout of the year, but Donaire's display of brains and timing was the Sweet Science at its finest. That Darchinyan was known for destroying his opponents made it that much sweeter. ■

UPSET OF THE YEAR

NONITO DONAIRE KO 5 VIC DARCHINYAN

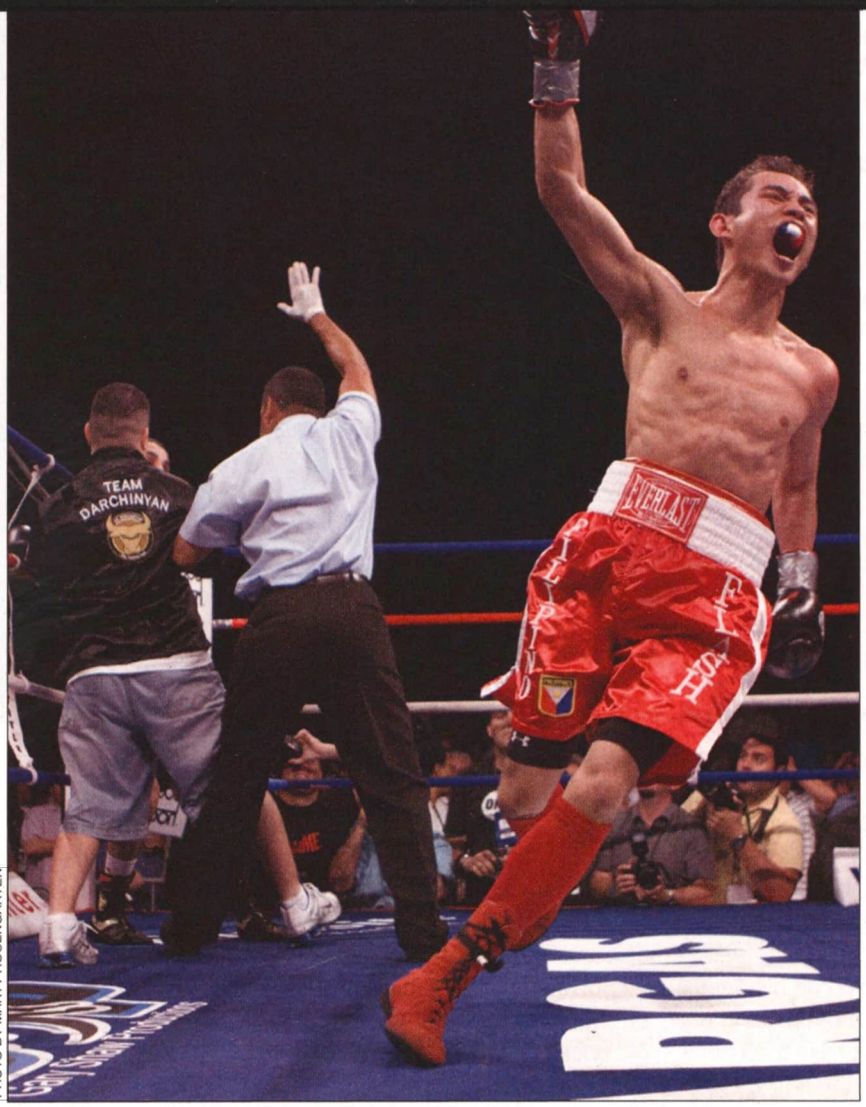


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Donaire celebrates his stunning upset of Darchinyan

The expression "upset win" has sometimes been credited to a horse named Upset, who overcame 100-1 odds to beat the mighty Man O' War at the Saratoga Sanford Memorial in 1919. While that's a nice urban legend that still gets bandied about by ESPN analysts, it's not true; the expression had been around for decades prior to 1919. Still, the spirit of old Upset was in the air when unknown Filipino Nonito Donaire stepped into the ring in July to face IBF flyweight titlist Vic Darchinyan. Darchinyan wasn't as revered as Man O' War, but for the past two years he'd been knocking out flyweights with regularity. He had defended the IBF bauble six times. If he wasn't a big name yet, a knockout artist like Darchinyan was sure to be one. The onus was on him to bring some interest to the 112-pound division.

Donaire's brother, Glenn, had been stopped by Darchinyan in July 2006, his jaw broken by the Aussie's heavy fists. As brutal as that stoppage had been, Donaire showed no fear as he artfully countered Darchinyan's sweeping punches with stiff jabs down the middle. Donaire's performance was so calm and clinical that you barely noticed how effective it was. Nonito Donaire was not only surviving Darchinyan's tactics, he was landing his own shots and escaping unscathed. Even when Darchinyan tried to bully Donaire into the ropes, the Filipino would slide away on light feet, leaving Darchinyan to swing at nothing.

Unfolding before our eyes was the typical scenario of craftsmanship over cavemanship. Donaire looked like a master boxer; Darchinyan looked like a blind man with a machete. Still, Darchinyan's believers felt there was nothing to worry about. After all, he was undefeated, winning 22 of 28 fights inside the distance. His previous opponent, Victor Burgos, took such a beating from Darchinyan that he ended up at the UCLA Medical Center to have blood clots removed from his brain. One-sided demolitions have been

Honorable Mention

Mexican star **Jorge Arce**, who hadn't lost a fight since 1999, was given a one-sided boxing lesson by the little known **Cristian Mijares** in April. Arce not only lost his WBC super flyweight belt, he lost a chance to meet Darchinyan in what would have been a highly anticipated flyweight bout. Arce was game, but he simply couldn't solve Mijares' classy style.

Junior middleweight **Kassim Ouma**, who was once a highly touted HBO darling, lost a split decision to **Saul Roman** in November. Ouma has lost three of his last eight bouts, so it won't be long before an Ouma loss is not considered an upset.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Underdog Rees on the attack against M'baye

Long-reigning WBC flyweight titlist **Pongsaklek Wonjongkam** lost a unanimous decision to veteran **Daisuke Naito** in July. Wonjongkam, a beltholder for seven years, had successfully defended against Naito in 2002 and 2005, and was favored to beat him again.

Forty-year-old junior middleweight **Troy Browning** scored a surprise win over 20-year-old prospect **Julio "Baby Face" Garcia** in June. Garcia, a hard-hitting youngster with 34 knockouts in 42 fights, was lackluster throughout. Browning, who resumed his career in 2006 after a seven-year absence, took advantage of Garcia's lack of pep to win a majority decision.

Unheralded Spaniard **Kiko Martinez** shocked Ireland's **Bernard Dunne** with an 86-second knockout in front of Dunne's home crowd in Dublin in August. It was junior featherweight Dunne's first defeat in 25 fights. Dunne was dropped twice before the fight was stopped.

Welshman **Gavin Rees** stunned the crowd at the Cardiff International Arena in July when he yanked the WBA junior welterweight crown away from titlist **Souleymane M'baye**. Rees earned a unanimous decision over the Frenchman.

Ramon Guevara had won only seven of 18 fights during his unspectacular career, so he was expected to be another victim for **Jorge Paez Jr.**, who was undefeated since his debut in 2005. Guevara snapped Paez' winning streak with a fourth-round stoppage in March. Hopefully, Guevara enjoyed the upset victory, because he went winless in his next five bouts.

WBA flyweight boss **Lorenzo Parra** claimed a headbutt in the chest from **Takefumi Sakata** caused pains to shoot up his left arm, which was why his corner threw in the towel early in the third round of their Tokyo fight in March. New WBA titlist Sakata, beaten twice before by Parra, said after the fight, "People might say, 'Well, look at how you won.' But I'll take a win however it comes."

Darchinyan's forte. Besides, Darchinyan was the type of brute who carried his power into the late rounds.

If you didn't grasp what was happening at first, you certainly noticed by the third or fourth round, as Donaire grew bolder with each exchange. His left hook was on target, and he wasn't afraid to stand in the pocket and throw it. Darchinyan, whose style consists of crabwalking to an opponent and chucking haymakers, was getting clipped each time he came forward. In the past, Darchinyan's opponents had been so paralyzed by the prospect of getting hit that they became willing targets. This was different. Donaire came into the Harbor Yard Arena in Bridgeport, Connecticut, having won 18 of 19 fights, and he had a plan. It involved his left hook. It involved revenge for the beating his brother had taken a year before. And it involved showing his talents to a Filipino press that cared little about him.

Darchinyan continued walking in, assuming his power would prevail. But the fighter with the nerve to call himself "The Raging Bull" found himself a loser at 1:38 of the fifth. Donaire had finally landed his left hook flush, and the result was stupefying. There would be no late-round power show by Darchinyan. In fact, Darchinyan had no idea what had happened. All he knew was that the IBF title belt was being slung around Donaire's shoulder, and the "Filipino Flash" seemed quite happy. Why wouldn't he be? He'd just scored the biggest upset of 2007. ■

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

PAUL MALIGNAGGI

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Malignaggi rips N'dou with a right

It looked like the end of Paul Malignaggi's career might be close at hand after being lashed by the iron fists of Miguel Cotto in June 2006. He had a broken right orbital bone, he suffered from internal bleeding, and who knows what effect the beating had on his psyche.

It was the kind of debilitating loss that can ruin a career. Malignaggi saw what Cotto did to Mohamad Abdulaev and Kelson Pinto. They've only fought a combined four times since being stopped by Cotto, and neither has been in a ring since 2005.

Malignaggi wasn't about to let that happen to him.

"I won't deny I got beaten up, but I never believed that I couldn't come back," said Malignaggi, who allowed himself eight months to recover. "It never occurred to me that people thought that I would be ruined after the fight. I know about Abdulaev and Pinto. I just never believed that that would happen to me."

When "The Magic Man" came back, in February 2007, he did so with panache, winning a lopsided unanimous decision over Edner Cherry and then capturing his first major belt by dominating Lovemore N'dou in June for the IBF junior welterweight title.

"When people say I can't do something," Malignaggi said, "I'm the kind of guy who will try twice as hard to prove people wrong."

Malignaggi has encountered doubt throughout much of his early career. A slick fighter who liked dying his hair fluorescent colors, Malignaggi didn't exactly endear himself to old-school purists. He appeared—

Honorable Mention

Darnell Wilson showed in 2007 what a little perseverance could do. In '06, his quick foray into the heavyweight ranks wasn't very productive; "The Ding-A-Ling Man" lost an eight-round decision to Owen Beck. Coming back down to cruiserweight, Wilson didn't fair much better, losing two more fights, before stopping Daniel Judah in September. Overall, Ding-A-Ling got his bell rung, going 1-3 over the course of '06. But he came back to go 3-0 in '07, including a sensational knockout of Emmanuel Nwodo on national TV in June. Wilson closed out the year as the ninth-rated cruiserweight in the world by THE RING.

PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITIFUMI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Munoz came back strong in beating Nashiro in '07

Sakio Bika had gone 2-2 in his last four fights, which included losses to Lucien Bute and super middleweight world champion Joe Calzaghe, before being selected for ESPN reality show *The Contender*. Bika then went on a surge, winning three straight and capturing the tournament with an enthralling eighth-round stoppage of Jaidon Codrington, in November. He finished the year as THE RING's eighth-rated super middleweight.

After twice coming up short in bids to take the WBC flyweight title away from Pongsaklek Wonjongkam, Japan's **Daisuke Naito** finally succeeded in 2007, winning a 12-round unanimous decision over the long-reigning Thai in July. In his first defense, Naito outpointed previously unbeaten Daiki Kameda in October. Both bouts were in Tokyo.

Israel Vazquez had his nose broken in losing junior featherweight world championship to Rafael Marquez in March '07. He recaptured the title in August by stopping Marquez in six.

Gerry Penalosa lost a controversial decision to Daniel Ponce De Leon in March '07, then came back to redeem himself with a big kayo of Jhonny Gonzalez to win the WBO bantamweight belt in August.

Fernando Montiel lost to Jhonny Gonzalez in May '06, then won three straight in '07, including two knockouts and a split-decision victory over Filipino Z Gorres, THE RING's 10th-rated junior bantamweight, in February '07.

After losing the WBA junior bantamweight title to Martin Castillo in January '06, **Alexander Munoz** returned to regain the WBA belt by beating Nobuo Nashiro in May '07 and making one successful title defense in September '07, against Kuniyuki Aizawa.

past tense—a little on the brash side for what little he had achieve, until, that is, the meeting Cotto. That was the fight in which Malignaggi was finally going to get the chance to back up his perceived arrogance with his fists.

Cotto, however, came with more firepower, downing Malignaggi in the second round on his way to a unanimous, though hard-fought, decision. But while Magic Man was beaten to a pulp, he received high accolades and earned more respect for his gutty performance against Cotto than he did in any of his previous 21 victories.

"An experience like that can make or break you, but if you don't dwell on the negative, you can make it a positive," Malignaggi said. "I learned I could deal with negativity, even though I came out with a loss. I proved a lot of people wrong. I stayed in, I showed courage. I guess people thought I wanted to protect my pretty face in there with someone who puts constant pressure on you like Cotto. People thought that once I got hit, I'd run. I didn't run."

While he will never again hear the ring announcer proclaim him "the undefeated Paul Malignaggi" before a fight, he's okay with that.

"I have a greater belief in myself, I think, after the Cotto fight," he said. "Whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger, and I suppose you can say that I'm living proof of that. I definitely believe in myself now. Everyone has to overcome adversity in their careers, but I never expected to have to overcome that kind of adversity. But I did, and today I'm wearing a title belt around my waist because of it."

EVENT OF THE YEAR

MAYWEATHER-DE LA HOYA

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

The MGM Grand Arena was packed to the gills for Mayweather-De La Hoya

It was a fight that had been whispered about for years, a battle no one dared dream about because there was too much preventing it from taking place. After all, Oscar De La Hoya was fighting at middleweight, while Floyd Mayweather was a mere junior welterweight. Plus, Mayweather's father had been De La Hoya's trainer for a number of years. Could Floyd Sr. actually train Oscar to face Floyd Jr.?

Promoters and cable networks ate up the potential for drama, but it still didn't seem likely. Gradually, over a two-year period, the fight became more feasible. Mayweather grew bigger in both fame and stature; De La Hoya floundered as a middleweight. They agreed to meet at 154, or thereabouts. Floyd Sr. sought $2-million to train De La Hoya, and when De La Hoya thought better of it, Papa Mayweather stepped aside. The path was clear. On May 5, 2007, the fight we thought would never happen actually did.

The buildup was brilliant. Golden Boy Promotions and HBO beat the drums for this fight with the intention of shattering all pay-per-view records. They called it "The World Awaits," and for a few weeks it certainly seemed as if the world was waiting. Even *Sports Illustrated* took notice, putting the combatants on its cover. It was the first *SI* boxing cover since Mike Tyson was featured grinning ghoulishly prior to his 2002 bout with Lennox Lewis. Mayweather-De La Hoya was not just boxing, it was a red carpet event. On fight night there were celebs aplenty at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. All that was lacking

Honorable Mention

A very important compromise occurred in 2007 when **Golden Boy Promotions** and **Top Rank** called a truce after feuding for months over the rights to **Manny Pacquiao**'s services. The truce means GBP and Top Rank can get together and promote some great fights. The first bout produced by this new union was Pacquiao-Marco Antonio Barrera II.

In June, **Miguel Cotto** and **Zab Judah** achieved something that hadn't been done since Bernard Hopkins and Felix Trinidad did it in 2001—they sold out Madison Square Garden for a fight.

If the Garden being filled with 20,600 was an event, we have to mention the astounding 50,150 people who turned out for the **Joe Calzaghe-Mikkel Kessler** bout in Cardiff, Wales. This was another fight we thought would never see the light, but not only did it happen, it lived up to its billing. Calzaghe is becoming one of those fighters who creates an event everytime he fights, and Kessler's game performance proved he also belongs with the elite.

British boxing experienced an incredible boom time in 2007. Calzaghe and Hatton led the U.K. pack, but Brits **Junior Witter**, **David Haye**, **Clinton Woods**, **Amir Khan**, and **Carl Froch** all performed well and are all currently in THE RING ratings.

HBO's new series ***24/7*** helped create massive interest in Mayweather-De La Hoya and Mayweather-Hatton. The show may not be as successful in the future without Mayweather's Jerry Springer-like family squabbles, but it was still a breakthrough in fight promotion.

Golden Boy Enterprises' publishing branch, Sports and Entertainment Publications, purchased several titles from the Kappa Publishing Group in August, including THE RING.

Not all events were upbeat this year. Just a few days after Mayweather-De La Hoya, the boxing world was rocked by sad news that former lightweight champion **Diego Corrales** was killed after crashing his motorcycle in Las Vegas.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

A cleanup crew examines the motorcycle Corrales rode to his death

was Joan Rivers to comment on Floyd's sombrero.

But it takes more than a bunch of Hollywood players to turn a fight into an event. There has to be some anticipation, some curiosity. There has to be a pair of fighters who represent two sides of the zeitgeist. In this case, it was the clear-cut, friendly De La Hoya versus obnoxious Mayweather. It was Olympic gold medal versus cheesy gold medallions. It was the most famous fighter in the world versus the pound-for-pound best. It was De La Hoya versus the man who wished he were De La Hoya.

Unfortunately, there were plenty of wrongheaded media members who approached the fight as if it were a life-and-death battle to save the sport. But that's what happens when the mainstream press drafts a basketball writer who hasn't watched boxing since 1985 to cover a bout.

Also on the downside, the momentous event did not result in a great fight. It was, at best, an interesting tiff. De La Hoya was game, but he seemed distracted, as if those long layoffs between fights were beginning to add up. "Pretty Boy" Floyd didn't exactly thrill us either. Instead, Mayweather did just enough to peck out a split decision. In a way, both fighters were hostages of hype: They'd come so far to reach this point that the physical act of boxing must've seemed like an unfortunate afterthought. Although we paid top dollar for this one, the fight faded from our memory as quickly as a cheap meal.

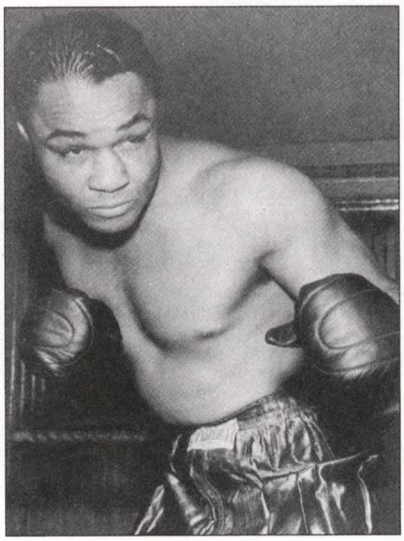
Still, the bout established Mayweather as a genuine marquee name in boxing, and proved that De La Hoya's star power hasn't faded a bit, even if his left jab isn't as easy to crank up as it once was.

During the weeks after the fight, there was a mountain of box-office receipts to tally. Pay-per-view buys reached an eye-popping total of 2.4 million for a domestic gross of $134.4-million. The bout had paid off handsomely, smashing all previous records like a steroid-pumped batter taking on Hank Aaron's home run record. The fight's tepid action didn't adversely affect Mayweather's value either. His December contest with Ricky Hatton drew a strong 850,000 buys, a very healthy trickle-down from Mayweather-De La Hoya, THE RING's 2007 Event of the Year. ■

PAST WINNERS

FIGHTER Of The Year

1928: Gene Tunney
1929: Tommy Loughran
1930: Max Schmeling
1931: Tommy Loughran
1932: Jack Sharkey
1933: No Award
1934: Tony Canzoneri/Barney Ross
1935: Barney Ross
1936: Joe Louis
1937: Henry Armstrong



Armstrong captured Fighter of the Year laurels in 1937

1938: Joe Louis
1939: Joe Louis
1940: Billy Conn
1941: Joe Louis
1942: Ray Robinson
1943: Fred Apostoli
1944: Beau Jack
1945: Willie Pep
1946: Tony Zale
1947: Gus Lesnevich
1948: Ike Williams
1949: Ezzard Charles
1950: Ezzard Charles
1951: Ray Robinson
1952: Rocky Marciano
1953: Bobo Olson
1954: Rocky Marciano
1955: Rocky Marciano
1956: Floyd Patterson
1957: Carmen Basilio
1958: Ingemar Johansson
1959: Ingemar Johansson
1960: Floyd Patterson
1961: Joe Brown
1962: Dick Tiger
1963: Cassius Clay
1964: Emile Griffith
1965: Dick Tiger
1966: No Award
1967: Joe Frazier
1968: Nino Benvenuti
1969: Jose Napoles
1970: Joe Frazier
1971: Joe Frazier
1972: Muhammad Ali/ Carlos Monzon
1973: George Foreman
1974: Muhammad Ali
1975: Muhammad Ali
1976: George Foreman
1977: Carlos Zarate
1978: Muhammad Ali
1979: Ray Leonard
1980: Thomas Hearns
1981: Ray Leonard/ Salvador Sanchez
1982: Larry Holmes
1983: Marvin Hagler
1984: Thomas Hearns
1985: Marvin Hagler/ Donald Curry
1986: Mike Tyson
1987: Evander Holyfield
1988: Mike Tyson
1989: Pernell Whitaker
1990: Julio Cesar Chavez
1991: James Toney
1992: Riddick Bowe
1993: Michael Carbajal
1994: Roy Jones
1995: Oscar De La Hoya
1996: Evander Holyfield
1997: Evander Holyfield
1998: Floyd Mayweather
1999: Paulie Ayala
2000: Felix Trinidad
2001: Bernard Hopkins
2002: Vernon Forrest
2003: James Toney
2004: Glen Johnson
2005: Ricky Hatton
2006: Manny Pacquiao

FIGHT Of The Year

1945: Rocky Graziano KO 10 Freddie Cochrane
1946: Tony Zale KO 6 Rocky Graziano
1947: Rocky Graziano KO 6 Tony Zale
1948: Marcel Cerdan KO 12 Tony Zale
1949: Willie Pep W 15 Sandy Saddler
1950: Jake LaMotta KO 15 Laurent Dauthuille
1951: Jersey Joe Walcott KO 7 Ezzard Charles
1952: Rocky Marciano KO 13 Jersey Joe Walcott
1953: Rocky Marciano KO 11 Roland LaStarza
1954: Rocky Marciano KO 8 Ezzard Charles
1955: Carmen Basilio KO 12 Tony DeMarco
1956: Carmen Basilio KO 9 Johnny Saxton
1957: Carmen Basilio W 15 Ray Robinson
1958: Ray Robinson W 15 Carmen Basilio
1959: Gene Fullmer KO 14 Carmen Basilio
1960: Floyd Patterson KO 5 Ingemar Johansson
1961: Joe Brown W 15 Dave Charnley
1962: Joey Giardello W 10 Henry Hank
1963: Cassius Clay W 10 Doug Jones
1964: Cassius Clay KO 7 Sonny Liston
1965: Floyd Patterson W 12 George Chuvalo
1966: Jose Torres W 15 Eddie Cotton
1967: Nino Benvenuti W 15 Emile Griffith
1968: Dick Tiger W 10 Frank DePaula
1969: Joe Frazier KO 7 Jerry Quarry
1970: Carlos Monzon KO 12 Nino Benvenuti
1971: Joe Frazier W 15 Muhammad Ali
1972: Bob Foster KO 14 Chris Finnegan
1973: George Foreman KO 2 Joe Frazier
1974: Muhammad Ali KO 8 George Foreman
1975: Muhammad Ali KO 14 Joe Frazier
1976: George Foreman KO 5 Ron Lyle
1977: Jimmy Young W 12 George Foreman
1978: Leon Spinks W 15 Muhammad Ali
1979: Danny Lopez KO 15 Mike Ayala
1980: Matthew Saad Muhammad KO 14 Yaqui Lopez
1981: Sugar Ray Leonard KO 14 Thomas Hearns
1982: Bobby Chacon W 15 Bazooka Limon
1983: Bobby Chacon W 12 Cornelius Boza-Edwards
1984: Jose Luis Ramirez KO 4 Edwin Rosario
1985: Marvin Hagler KO 3 Thomas Hearns
1986: Steve Cruz W 15 Barry McGuigan
1987: Sugar Ray Leonard W 12 Marvin Hagler
1988: Tony Lopez W 12 Rocky Lockridge
1989: Roberto Duran W 12 Iran Barkley
1990: Julio Cesar Chavez KO 12 Meldrick Taylor
1991: Robert Quiroga W 12 Akeem Anifowoshe
1992: Riddick Bowe W 12 Evander Holyfield
1993: Michael Carbajal KO 7 Chiquita Gonzalez
1994: Jorge Castro KO 9 John David Jackson
1995: Saman Sorjaturong KO 7 Chiquita Gonzalez
1996: Evander Holyfield KO 11 Mike Tyson
1997: Arturo Gatti KO 5 Gabriel Ruelas
1998: Ivan Robinson W 10 Arturo Gatti
1999: Paulie Ayala W 12 Johnny Tapia
2000: Erik Morales W 12 Marco Antonio Barrera
2001: Micky Ward W 10 Emanuel Burton
2002: Micky Ward W 10 Arturo Gatti

McClellan slams Jackson in the 1993 Knockout of the Year

2003: Arturo Gatti W 10
Micky Ward
2004: Marco Antonio Barrera W 12
Erik Morales
2005: Diego Corrales KO 10
Jose Luis Castillo
2006: Somsak Sithchatchawal KO 10
Mahyar Monshipour

ROUND Of The Year

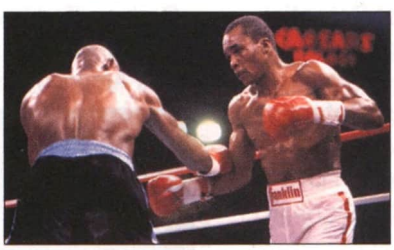
1945: Joyce-Williams, 12
1946: Zale-Graziano, 6
1947: Louis-Walcott, 4
1948: Louis-Walcott, 11
1949: Graziano-Fusari, 10
1950: LaMotta-Dauthuille, 15
1951: Marciano-Louis, 8
1952: Marciano-Walcott, 13
1953: Gavilan-Basilio, 2
1954: Moore-Johnson, 14
1955: Moore-Olson, 3
1956: Robinson-Olson, 4
1957: Robinson-Fullmer, 5
1958: Johansson-Machen, 1
1959: Johansson-Patterson, 3
1960: Patterson-Johansson, 5
1961: Patterson-Johansson, 1
1962: Liston-Patterson, 1
1963: Liston-Patterson, 1
1964: Torres-Olson, 1
1965: Torres-Pastrano, 6
1966: Ortiz-Ramos, 5
1967: Tiger-Rouse, 12
1968: Foster-Tiger, 4
1969: Benvenuti-Rodriguez, 11
1970: Ali-Bonavena, 15
1971: Frazier-Ali, 15
1972: Ali-Foster, 5
1973: Foreman-Frazier, 2
1974: Ali-Foreman, 8
1975: Ali-Frazier, 12
1976: Foreman-Lyle, 4 & 5
1977: Young-Foreman, 12
1978: Spinks-Ali, 15
1979: Franklin-Johnson, 8
1980: Saad Muhammad-Lopez, 8
1981: Lee-LoCicero, 5
1982: Gomez-Pintor, 3
1983: Holmes-Witherspoon, 9
1984: Meza-Garza, 1
1985: Hagler-Hearns, 1
1986: Cruz-McGuigan, 15
1987: Seabrooks-Jacob, 1
1988: Tyson-Spinks, 1
1989: Gutierrez-Franklin, 12
1990: Davis-Breland, 9
1991: No Award
1992: Bowe-Holyfield, 10
1993: Norris-Waters, 2
1994: Castro-Jackson, 9
1995: Sorjaturong-Gonzalez, 7
1996: Liles-Littles, 3
1997: Gatti-Ruelas, 5
1998: Robinson-Gatti II, 3
1999: De La Hoya-Quartey, 6
2000: Morales-Barrera, 5
2001: Hopkins-Trinidad, 10
2002: Ward-Gatti I, 9
2003: Freitas-Barrios, 11
2004: Barrera-Morales III, 11
2005: Corrales-Castillo I, 10
2006: Sithchatchawal-Monshipour, 10

KNOCKOUT Of The Year

1989: Michael Nunn KO 1
Sumbu Kalambay
1990: Terry Norris KO 1
John Mugabi
1991: No Award
1992: Kennedy McKinney KO 11
Welcome Ncita
Morris East KO 11
Akinobu Hiranaka
1993: Gerald McClellan KO 5
Julian Jackson
1994: George Foreman KO 10
Michael Moorer
1995: Julio Cesar Vasquez KO 11
Carl Daniels
1996: Wilfredo Vasquez KO 11
Eloy Rojas
1997: Arturo Gatti KO 5
Gabriel Ruelas
1998: Roy Jones KO 4
Virgil Hill
1999: Derrick Jefferson KO 6
Maurice Harris
2000: Ben Tackie KO 10
Roberto Garcia
2001: Lennox Lewis KO 4
Hasim Rahman
2002: Lennox Lewis KO 8
Mike Tyson
2003: Rocky Juarez KO 10
Antonio Diaz
2004: Antonio Tarver KO 2
Roy Jones
2005: Allan Green KO 1
Jaidon Codrington
2006: Calvin Brock KO 6
Zuri Lawrence

UPSET Of The Year

1980: Yasutsune Uehara KO 6
Sammy Serrano
1981: Roger Stafford W 10
Pipino Cuevas
1982: Kirkland Laing W 10
Roberto Duran
1983: Gerrie Coetzee KO 10
Michael Dokes
1984: Gene Hatcher KO 11
Johnny Bumphus
1985: Michael Spinks W 15
Larry Holmes
1986: Lloyd Honeyghan KO 6
Donald Curry
1987: Sugar Ray Leonard W 12
Marvin Hagler



Leonard upsets Hagler in 1987

1988: Iran Barkley KO 3
Thomas Hearns
1989: Rene Jacquot W 12
Donald Curry
1990: Buster Douglas KO 10
Mike Tyson
1991: No Award
1992: Azumah Nelson KO 8
Jeff Fenech
1993: Simon Brown KO 4
Terry Norris
1994: Vuyani Bungu W 12
Kennedy McKinney
1995: Willy Salazar KO 7
Danny Romero
1996: Evander Holyfield KO 11
Mike Tyson
1997: Vince Phillips KO 10
Kostya Tszyu
1998: Ivan Robinson W 10
Arturo Gatti
1999: Willy Wise W 10
Julio Cesar Chavez
2000: Jose Luis Castillo W 12
Steve Johnston
2001: Hasim Rahman KO 5
Lennox Lewis
2002: Juan Carlos Rubio W 10
Francisco Bojado
2003: Corrie Sanders KO 2
Wladimir Klitschko
2004: Glen Johnson KO 9
Roy Jones
2005: Zahir Raheem W 12
Erik Morales
2006: Carlos Baldomir W 12
Zab Judah

COMEBACK Of The Year

1980: Shoji Oguma
1981: Jimmy Young
1982: Bobby Chacon
1983: Roberto Duran
1984: Marvin Johnson
1985: Lupe Pintor
1986: Edwin Rosario
1987: Frankie Duarte
1988: Michael Dokes
1989: Roberto Duran
1990: Tony Lopez
1991: Vinny Pazienza
1992: Iran Barkley
1993: Zack Padilla
1994: George Foreman
1995: Azumah Nelson
1996: Danny Romero
1997: Vince Phillips
1998: Kostya Tszyu
1999: Michael Carbajal
2000: Virgil Hill
2001: John Michael Johnson
2002: Arturo Gatti
2003: James Toney
2004: Marco Antonio Barrera
2005: Ike Quartey
2006: Oleg Maskaev

EVENT Of The Year

1993: Fan Man at Holyfield-Bowe
1994: Revenge: The Rematches
1995: Tyson returns
1996: Riot at The Garden
1997: The bite
1998: Tyson's reinstatement
1999: The IBF indictments
2000: Mosley vs. De La Hoya
2001: Middleweight World Championship Series
2002: The Lewis-Tyson press conference brawl
2003: Roy Jones fights at heavyweight
2004: Lennox Lewis retirement
2005: *The Contender*
2006: Corrales-Castillo III Weigh-in

THE 29TH ANNUAL HIGHLY UNOFFICIAL OFFICIAL AWARDS

Trainer of the Year
Enzo Calzaghe

Manager of the Year
Cameron Dunkin

Female Fighter of the Year
Carina Moreno

Female Fight of the Year
Emiko Raiko W 10
Ann Saccurato

Most Exciting Division
Welterweight

Most Boring Division
Heavyweight

Division With Most Potential
Lightweight

Division With Least Potential
Junior Middleweight
(assuming Oscar De La Hoya
is a welterweight again)

Count Dracula Bloodbath Crimson Band-Aid
Michael Katsidis W 12
Czar Amonsot
Victor Ortiz Tech. Draw 1
Martin Cordova Jr.
Zab Judah No-Contest 1
Ruben Galvan

Future Champion Trophy
Juan Manuel Lopez

Billy Graham-Joey Giardello Highway Robbery Award
Joel Casamayor W 12
Jose Santa Cruz
Kid Diamond W 12 Miguel Huerta
Demetrius Hopkins W 12
Steve Forbes

Tony Zale Bodypuncher Memorial
Jorge Arce

Eder Jofre Best-Fighter-You-Never-Saw Award
Chris John

Duane Bobick Disappointment Award
Joel Casamayor, Audley Harrison,
Bernard Dunne, Kassim Ouma

Rocky Balboa Gutsiest Effort Award
Jesse Feliciano (vs. Kermit Cintron)
Diego Corrales (vs. Joshua Clottey)
Jaidon Codrington (vs. Sakio Bika)
Sakio Bika (vs. Jaidon Codrington)
Graham Earl (vs. Michael Katsidis)
Michael Katsidis (vs. Czar Amonsot)
Czar Amonsot (vs. Michael Katsidis)

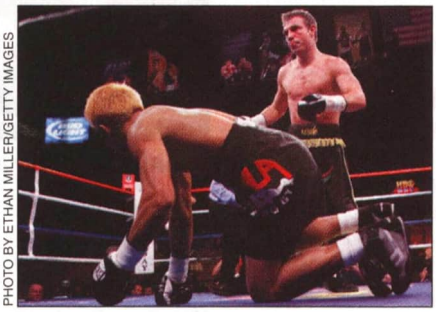


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Katsidis showed guts in beating Amonsot

Henry Armstrong Windmill Imitation
Adrian Diaconu

Red Light-Green Light Crossroads Fight Of The Year
Samuel Peter W 12 James Toney

The Comedy-On-TV Golden Giggles Award
Oscar De La Hoya and his family
riding Segways around their house

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

Dawson had the distinction of two TV mismatches, including this pounding of Ruiz

on HBO's *24/7*, mocking the
Segway riding of Floyd Mayweather
and 50 Cent

Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom Featherfists Award
Paul Malignaggi

Muhammad Ali Time-To-Retire Pension Check
James Toney, Hector Camacho Jr.,
Will Grigsby, Teddy Reid, Virgil Hill,
Evander Holyfield (once again)

Tony Ayala Jr. Wasted Talent Trophy
Luis Perez

Thomas Dewey "Fading Down The Stretch" Award
Jean-Marc Mormeck
(vs. O'Neil Bell)

Should've-Stayed-Out-To-Pasture Wall Calendar
Tommy Morrison, Israel Cardona,
Lou Savarese, Jeremy Williams

Buster Mathis Miniature Empty Refrigerator
Fernando Vargas

Don't-Get-Up-To-Get-A-Beer Silver Mug
T.J. Wilson KO 1 Travis Walker
Robert Guerrero KO 1 Martin Honorio
Giovanni Segura KO 1 Daniel Reyes
Edwin Valero KO 1 Michael Lozada
David Haye KO 1 Tomasz Bonin
Victor Ortiz KO 1 Carlos Maussa
Daniel Ponce De Leon KO 1 Rey Bautista
Jaidon Codrington KO 1 Wayne Johnsen
Kermit Cintron KO 2 Walter Matthysse

Howard Cosell "We Love Boxing" Trophy
Every single media member who latched on to the obvious but ignorant "fight to save boxing" angle for Mayweather-De La Hoya

Ken Norton Media Good Guy Award
Ricky Hatton

Muhammad Ali "How To Lose With Class" Trophy
Mikkel Kessler

Spit-Or-Get-Off-The-Pot Award
Zsolt Erdei, Sergei Dzindziruk, Antonio Tarver

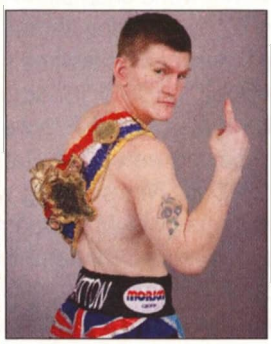


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS
Hatton was number one with the media in 2007

Joe Bugner Just-Glad-To-Be-Here Trophy
Marco Antonio Barrera (vs. Manny Pacquiao)
Alex Garcia (vs. Roman Karmazin)
Acelino Freitas (vs. Juan Diaz)

Archie Moore Ol'-Man-River Rocking Chair
Javier Castillejo

Jake LaMotta Cast-Iron-Chin Anvil
Jesse Feliciano (vs. Kermit Cintron)
Ben Tackie (vs. Alfonso Gomez)
Tomasz Adamek (vs. Chad Dawson)

Most Improved Fighter Award
Juan Diaz

Gene Tunney Distinguished Champion Award
Joe Calzaghe

Tap Tap Makathini Name Of The Year
Chris P. Bacon

Azumah Nelson "Where'd He Come From?" Trophy
Joseph Agbeko (KO 7 Luis Perez)
Kiko Martinez (KO 1 Bernard Dunne)
Michael Sprott (KO 3 Audley Harrison)
Troy Browning (W 10 Julio Cesar Garcia)
Gavin Rees (W 12 Souleymane Mbaye)
Saul Roman (W 10 Kassim Ouma)

TV Mismatches Of The Year
Wladimir Klitschko KO 2 Ray Austin (HBO)
Joel Julio KO 1 Mauro Lucero (ESPN2)
Antonio Margarito KO 1 Golden Johnson (HBO PPV)
Hugo Cazares KO 2 Wilfrido Perez (Telefutura)
Andre Berto KO 1 Nito Bravo (HBO)
Joe Mesi KO 1 George Linberger (Versus)
Chad Dawson KO 6 Jesus Ruiz (Showtime)
Chad Dawson KO 4 Epifanio Mendoza (Showtime)
Antonio Tarver KO 4 Danny Santiago (Showtime)
Miguel Cotto KO 11 Oktay Urkal (HBO)
Chris Byrd KO 7 Paul Marinaccio (ESPN2)

Never-In-A-Bad-Fight Purple Heart
Israel Vazquez, Rafael Marquez, Michael Katsidis, Kelly Pavlik, Darnell Wilson, Miguel Cotto, Juan Diaz

Best Tiny Man In Elevator Shoes
Ulises Solis

Rip-Off-The-Public Non-Effort Of The Year
Shannon Briggs (L 12 Sultan Ibragimov)
Lorenzo Parra (KO by 3 Takefumi Sakata)
Mike Arnaoutis (L 12 Kendall Holt)

Steve Martin Arrow-Through-Head Ridiculous Gimmick
Junior featherweight prospect Juan Manuel Lopez making a media event out of getting a haircut prior to his fights

Mando Muniz "If At First You Don't Succeed" Persistence Award
Takefumi Sakata, Daisuke Naito, David Haye

Globetrotters vs. Generals "Artificially Inflated Record" Award
Victor Oganov

Yogi Berra "It's Not Over Till It's Over" Resiliency Award
Jorge Arce (KO 6 Tomas Rojas)
Darnell Wilson (KO 11 Emmanuel Nwodo)
Gerry Penalosa (KO 7 Jhonny Gonzalez)
Francisco Palacios (KO 6 Louis Azille)

Facial Monstrosity Of The Year Golden Enswell
Michael Katsidis (vs. Czar Amonsot)

Dave Tiberi Disappearing Fighter Award
Sergei Liakhovich, Ike Quartey, Grady Brewer

Emile Griffith "Steady If Unspectacular" Trophy
Sultan Ibragimov, Zsolt Erdei, Ivan Calderon, Francisco Lorenzo

Gerry Cooney Proper Pigmentation Award
Tye Fields

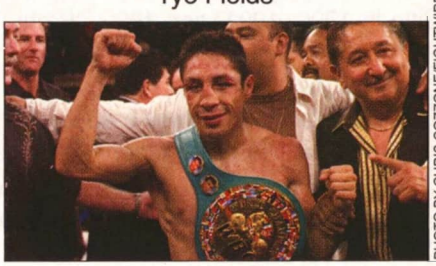


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES
Vazquez always puts on exciting fights

"BEST FIGHTER" POLL

A Survey Of The Experts

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Floyd Mayweather hones in on Oscar De La Hoya

There's no doubt Floyd Mayweather left an indelible imprint on 2007. The welterweight world champion made history inside the ring, first as part of the May pay-per-view bonanza that was capped by a decision victory over Oscar De La Hoya, then with a conclusive kayo of Ricky Hatton in December.

Mayweather's '07 dominance had many experts tagging all-time status to his resume. If that's still debatable, "Pretty Boy" certainly joined an exclusive group as far as the "Best Fighter Poll" is concerned.

In the 27-year history of the poll, only Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Roy Jones, Bernard Hopkins—and now Mayweather—were selected unanimously by the 10-member panel as the number-one pound-for-pound fighter.

You can also count Mayweather in another rare category, as he has now topped the list for three straight years. He ties ring legend Julio Cesar Chavez, who garnered that prestigious unofficial title in 1990, 1991, and 1992. "Pretty Boy" sits only behind Hagler, the only consecutive four-time winner (1983-1986).

The 47-point difference between Mayweather and number-two rated Manny Pacquiao is the largest difference in the poll since 1999, when Jones was a unanimous choice and separated by the all-time high 65 points from Oscar De La Hoya. The difference is also the third largest of all-time, behind Jones in '99 and Hagler's 54-point edge over Aaron Pryor in 1983.

Though he fought only once in '07, De La Hoya returned to the list for the first time since 2003, based on his solid performance against Mayweather. "The Golden Boy" finished in a 10th-place tie with rising star Juan Diaz, who makes his debut appearance. Joining Diaz as a first-time poll entrant is middleweight world champion Kelly Pavlik, whose claimed victories in '07 over Edison Miranda and Jermain Taylor.

This year's panel: Showtime's *ShoBox* ringside analyst Steve Farhood, HBO's *Championship Boxing* ringside analyst Max Kellerman, IBF flyweight titlist Nonito Donaire, ESPN.com boxing writer Dan Rafael, trainer Buddy McGirt, *Philadelphia Daily News* boxing writer Bernard Fernandez, undefeated bantamweight prospect Abner Mares, ESPN.com boxing editor Darius Ortiz, and British *Boxing News* editor Claude Abrams.

To compile the standings, we awarded points for each vote a fighter received: 15 points for a first place vote, 12 for a second-place vote, nine for a third-place vote, seven for a fourth-place vote, six for a fifth-place vote, five for a sixth-place vote, four for a seventh-place vote, three for an eighth-place vote, two for a ninth-place vote, and one for a 10th-place vote.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Manny Pacquiao slams a right off Jorge Solis

Bernard Fernandez

1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Manny Pacquiao
3. Joe Calzaghe
4. Miguel Cotto
5. Bernard Hopkins
6. Juan Manuel Marquez
7. Kelly Pavlik
8. Israel Vazquez
9. Paul Williams
10. Joan Guzman

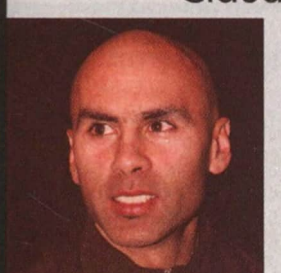
"It's still a wide-open race between Democratic presidential hopefuls Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, and there's maybe four Republicans who could wangle their party's nomination. But the voters, at least in this poll, have spoken and the clear choice to lead boxing into 2008 is Floyd Mayweather Jr. How good is he? Not as good as he thinks he is, but the best of his era. Mayweather is one of three welterweights in my top 10, along with alphabet titlists Miguel Cotto and Paul Williams. I also wish I had room to squeeze in Juan Diaz, Wladimir Klitschko, and the Aussie annihilator, Michael Katsidis."

Darius Ortiz

1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Joe Calzaghe
3. Manny Pacquiao
4. Juan Manuel Marquez
5. Bernard Hopkins
6. Winky Wright
7. Miguel Cotto
8. Israel Vasquez
9. Rafael Marquez
10. Kelly Pavlik

"If Floyd Mayweather were to retire tomorrow, he'd go down as an all-time great. He's faced every type of style and conquered every type of fighter throughout his career. In 2007 alone he edged a bigger, stronger fighter in Oscar De La Hoya and knocked out the usually durable, all-action fighter Ricky Hatton. Joe Calzaghe's 10 years as champion is hard to argue with, while Manny Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez could make cases for themselves next year. But '07 was all about 'Money' Mayweather."

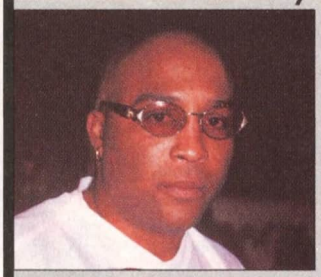
Claude Abrams



1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Joe Calzaghe
3. Manny Pacquiao
4. Miguel Cotto
5. Kelly Pavlik
6. Juan Diaz
7. Ivan Calderon
8. Chris John
9. Juan Manuel Marquez
10. Israel Vazquez

"There's no question Mayweather is the best and Calzaghe, being undefeated and champion so long, is a close second. Pacquiao, the destroyer of Mexicans and a champ in several divisions, comes next, with Cotto, excellent in defeating Zab Judah and Shane Mosley, fast closing in on the top three. Pavlik comes in for defeating the undisputed middleweight champ, and, likewise, young, unbeaten Diaz has cleaned up at lightweight. Calderon is vastly underrated, and John doesn't get the acclaim he deserves. He beat Juan Manuel Marquez, after all. Marquez is next. He has rebounded from the John defeat to beat Marco Antonio Barrera before Pacquiao retired the great Mexican. I considered Bernard Hopkins, Ricky Hatton, and Wladimir Klitschko for the final spot, but settled on Israel Vazquez."

Buddy McGirt



1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Bernard Hopkins
3. Oscar De La Hoya
4. Manny Pacquiao
5. Juan Manuel Marquez
6. Joe Calzaghe
7. Miguel Cotto
8. Israel Vazquez
9. Rafael Marquez
10. Juan Diaz

"Floyd is the best fighter in the world because he's beaten everyone. He beat Zab, and he actually had a tougher time with Carlos Baldomir than he did with Ricky Hatton, in my opinion. Hatton is very overrated, I think. I put Bernard Hopkins up there because he's beaten the best, and he's been in with the best. He stepped up two weight classes and beat Tarver when no one thought he could. You gotta put him in there. Oscar I put at three because he's the only one who really tested Floyd. Oscar really took Floyd to the well. I put Pacquiao below them because he beat two guys near the end, Erik Morales and Marco Antonio Barrera."

Max Kellerman

1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Joe Calzaghe
3. Manny Pacquiao
4. Bernard Hopkins
5. Juan Manuel Marquez
6. Kelly Pavlik
7. Oscar De La Hoya
8. Miguel Cotto
9. Israel Vazquez
10. Rafael Marquez

"Floyd is in the best spot in the game. It's a rarified position. There have only been seven or eight pound-for-pound guys at the top for any period of time. We're talking Roberto Duran in the late-1970s, then Sugar Ray Leonard, then Marvelous Marvin Hagler. In the last 30 years, it's a very special position. We're talking all-time greats. Floyd has a chance to go down as one of three best pure boxers in the last half-century, with Willie Pep and Pernell Whitaker. He certainly has to start being considered an all-time great, and if he were to stop fighting today, I would say he is."

Nonito Donaire

1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Manny Pacquiao
3. Bernard Hopkins
4. Joe Calzaghe
5. Miguel Cotto
6. Juan Manuel Marquez
7. Winky Wright
8. Israel Vazquez
9. Antonio Margarito
10. Juan Diaz

"A lot of people may not like Mayweather's style, and he may not be as exciting as Pacquiao, but he wins and he knocked out Hatton, which no one did before. Pacquiao is certainly the most exciting fighter in the world, and Hopkins beat Antonio Tarver to become light heavyweight champion, then beat Winky Wright. Joe Calzaghe has had a very good year, beating Mikkel Kessler the way he did. He's breaking records and he's kept his title. I have to put Cotto in the top five because he beats people with his pressure. He's like an engine, he starts slow and gets going."

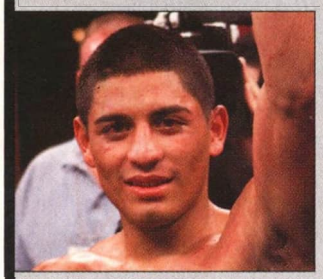
PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Joe Calzaghe has Peter Manfredo in trouble

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Juan Manuel Marquez closes in on Marco Antonio Barrera

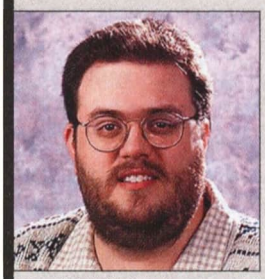
Abner Mares



1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Manny Pacquiao
3. Wladimir Klitschko
4. Joe Calzaghe
5. Bernard Hopkins
6. Miguel Cotto
7. Juan Diaz
8. Juan Manuel Marquez
9. Israel Vazquez
10. Ivan Calderon

"I don't think there is any question that Mayweather and Pacquiao are the top two. Those two are superstars, but Klitschko, Calzaghe, and Hopkins have been successful for so long. Juan Diaz is a good fighter and he won his last two fights by knockout. Diaz is probably the best lightweight in the world."

Dan Rafael



1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Joe Calzaghe
3. Manny Pacquiao
4. Bernard Hopkins
5. Juan Manuel Marquez
6. Miguel Cotto
7. Winky Wright
8. Israel Vazquez
9. Rafael Marquez
10. Kelly Pavlik

"Floyd Mayweather being number one is clear as day. If you don't have Floyd Mayweather number one, I don't know what you're looking at. I have Calzaghe two; some have Pacquiao two. I give Joe the benefit of the doubt because of his longevity. The top few guys, it's very straightforward. It's actually hard to do a top 10 these days and leave someone like a Juan Diaz out with all he's done."

Steve Farhood

1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Manny Pacquiao
3. Juan Manuel Marquez
4. Joe Calzaghe
5. Miguel Cotto
6. Israel Vazquez
7. Kelly Pavlik
8. Bernard Hopkins
9. Juan Diaz
10. Joan Guzman

"It's time to think of Mayweather not in terms of his standing against contemporaries, but rather his place in history. I'll have to see him overcome some adversity before I rank him alongside Ray Leonard, who remains the best fighter I've seen in my 30 years in the game. My guess is that Pacquiao is slowing down, which is good news for Juan Manuel Marquez. I've underrated Calzaghe for years, and stubborn as I am, I'm probably continuing to do so by placing him only at number four. Cotto, Pavlik, and Diaz are all on the upswing. I can't say the same of Hopkins, but he's doing a pretty damned good Archie Moore impression."

The Ring

1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Manny Pacquiao
3. Juan Manuel Marquez
4. Bernard Hopkins
5. Joe Calzaghe
6. Israel Vazquez
7. Miguel Cotto
8. Ricky Hatton
9. Winky Wright
10. Rafael Marquez

"Where as past years there could have been some debate as to who was the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world, Mayweather crushed any debate whatsoever in 2007. He stepped out from beyond superstar status in the boxing world and gained mainstream appeal in beating future Hall of Famer Oscar De La Hoya in May—and going up in weight to do it. Stopping Ricky Hatton, a pound-for-pound entrant, just added the exclamation point. Moreover, there doesn't appear to be anyone on the horizon who could even threaten Mayweather's grip as the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world."

THE RESULTS

1. Floyd Mayweather—150
2. Manny Pacquiao—103
3. Joe Calzaghe—89
4. Bernard Hopkins—63
5. Juan Manuel Marquez—58
6. Miguel Cotto—51
7. Israel Vazquez—30
8. Kelly Pavlik—21
9. Winky Wright—15
10. Juan Diaz—13 (tie)
10. Oscar De La Hoya—13 (tie)

ALSO RECEIVING VOTES

Wladimir Klitschko—9
Rafael Marquez—8
Ivan Calderon—5
Chris John—3
Ricky Hatton—3
Joan Guzman—2
Antonio Margarito—2
Paul Williams—2

2006 POLL

1. Floyd Mayweather—141
2. Manny Pacquiao—129
3. Winky Wright—84
4. Jermain Taylor—61
5. Joe Calzaghe—49
6. Rafael Marquez—28
7. Ricky Hatton—23
8. Shane Mosley—20
9. Jose Luis Castillo—19
10. Bernard Hopkins—16

2005 POLL

1. Floyd Mayweather—144
2. Winky Wright—113
3. Marco Antonio Barrera—70
4. Juan Manuel Marquez—43
5. Rafael Marquez—39
6. Ricky Hatton—38
7. Jose Luis Castillo—36
8. Jermain Taylor—34
9. Zab Judah—31
10. Antonio Tarver—30

2004 POLL

1. Bernard Hopkins—150
2. Floyd Mayweather—111
3. Kostya Tszyu—88
4. Winky Wright—70
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—52
6. Manny Pacquiao—38
7. Erik Morales—26
8. Juan Manuel Marquez—25
9. Felix Trinidad—22
10. Diego Corrales—11 (tie)
10. Rafael Marquez—11 (tie)

2003 POLL

1. Roy Jones—142
2. Bernard Hopkins—114
3. Floyd Mayweather—97
4. Shane Mosley—53
5. Kostya Tszyu—48
6. Oscar De La Hoya—45
7. Manny Pacquiao—38
8. James Toney—35
9. Erik Morales—31
10. Lennox Lewis—22

2002 POLL

1. Roy Jones—135
2. Oscar De La Hoya—89
3. Marco Antonio Barrera—78 (tie)
3. Vernon Forrest—78 (tie)
3. Bernard Hopkins—78 (tie)
6. Floyd Mayweather—45
7. Lennox Lewis—43
8. Kostya Tszyu—42
9. Erik Morales—25
10. Shane Mosley—13

2001 POLL

1. Shane Mosley—132
2. Roy Jones—108
3. Bernard Hopkins—98
4. Floyd Mayweather—77
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—44
6. Oscar De La Hoya—40
7. Felix Trinidad—39
8. Kostya Tszyu—34
9. Lennox Lewis—23
10. Ricardo Lopez—22

2000 POLL

1. Felix Trinidad—126
2. Shane Mosley—123
3. Roy Jones—109
4. Oscar De La Hoya—43
5. Floyd Mayweather—39
6. Naseem Hamed—37
7. Ricardo Lopez—35
8. Diego Corrales—33
9. Bernard Hopkins—32
10. Lennox Lewis—31

1999 POLL

1. Roy Jones—150
2. Oscar De La Hoya—85
3. Floyd Mayweather—78
4. Shane Mosley—68 (tie)
4. Felix Trinidad—68 (tie)
6. Mark Johnson—47 (tie)
6. Ricardo Lopez—47 (tie)
8. Erik Morales—21
9. Bernard Hopkins—16
10. Fernando Vargas—15

1998 POLL

1. Roy Jones—141
2. Oscar De La Hoya—123
3. Felix Trinidad—67
4. Shane Mosley—65
5. Evander Holyfield—55
6. Mark Johnson—45
7. Naseem Hamed—33
8. Ricardo Lopez—23
9. Floyd Mayweather—19
10. Pernell Whitaker—14

1997 POLL

1. Oscar De La Hoya—123
2. Roy Jones—117
3. Ricardo Lopez—83
4. Evander Holyfield—80
5. Felix Trinidad—65
6. Pernell Whitaker—37
7. Naseem Hamed—28
8. Mark Johnson—22 (tie)
8. Junior Jones—22 (tie)
10. Johnny Tapia—18

1996 POLL

1. Roy Jones—123
2. Oscar De La Hoya—107
3. Pernell Whitaker—92
4. Evander Holyfield—64
5. Felix Trinidad—59
6. Ricardo Lopez—56
7. Terry Norris—28
8. Ike Quartey—21
9. Azumah Nelson—12
10. Yuri Arbachakov—11

1995 POLL

1. Roy Jones—138
2. Pernell Whitaker—126
3. Oscar De La Hoya—74
4. Felix Trinidad—59
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—48
6. Riddick Bowe—44
7. Ricardo Lopez—37
8. Julio Cesar Chavez—18
9. Ike Quartey—16
10. Naseem Hamed—12

1994 POLL

1. Pernell Whitaker—130
2. Roy Jones—129
3. Frankie Randall—53
4. Ricardo Lopez—45
5. Orlando Canizales—39
6. Chiquita Gonzalez—38
7. James Toney—36
8. Gerald McClellan—33
9. Felix Trinidad—29
10. Kevin Kelley—28

1993 POLL

1. Pernell Whitaker—147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—86
3. Terry Norris—84
4. James Toney—76
5. Michael Carbajal—39
6. Evander Holyfield—36
7. Buddy McGirt—28
8. Roy Jones—23
9. Orlando Canizales—22
10. Ricardo Lopez—21

1992 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—136
2. Terry Norris—91
3. Pernell Whitaker—85
4. Buddy McGirt—60
5. Riddick Bowe—45
6. Orlando Canizales—36
7. Azumah Nelson—34
8. Lennox Lewis—24
9. Julian Jackson—18
10. Roy Jones—15 (tie)
10. Mike McCallum—15 (tie)

1991 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—138
2. Pernell Whitaker—100
3. Evander Holyfield—78
4. Mike Tyson—55
5. Meldrick Taylor—48
6. Mike McCallum—38
7. Thomas Hearns—34
8. Khaosai Galaxy—25
9. Terry Norris—22
10. Simon Brown—21

1990 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—123
2. Pernell Whitaker—104
3. Mike Tyson—71
4. Meldrick Taylor—57
5. Buster Douglas—51
6. Simon Brown—27
7. Antonio Esparragoza—25
8. Michael Nunn—23
9. Evander Holyfield—21
10. Humberto Gonzalez—14

1989 POLL

1. Mike Tyson—147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—91
3. Meldrick Taylor—61
4. Michael Nunn—60
5. Evander Holyfield—56
6. Pernell Whitaker—46
7. Ray Leonard—28
8. Jeff Fenech—27
9. Azumah Nelson—18
10. Marlon Starling—16

1988 POLL

1. Mike Tyson—144
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—118
3. Evander Holyfield—66
4. Ray Leonard—55
5. Jeff Fenech—44
6. Michael Nunn—33
7. Azumah Nelson—32
8. Jung Koo Chang—23
9. Buddy McGirt—21
10. Sumbu Kalambay—18

NO POLL IN 1987

1986 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—138
2. Mike Tyson—92
3. Donald Curry—59
4. Thomas Hearns—52
5. Edwin Rosario—47
6. Azumah Nelson—45 (tie)
6. Michael Spinks—45 (tie)
8. Evander Holyfield—32
9. Julio Cesar Chavez—26
10. Hector Camacho—22

1985 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—150
2. Hector Camacho—86
3. Michael Spinks—85
4. Donald Curry—78
5. Thomas Hearns—42
6. Barry McGuigan—32
7. Milton McCrory—25
8. Julio Cesar Chavez—22 (tie)
8. Pinklon Thomas—22 (tie)
10. Larry Holmes—21

1984 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—112
2. Aaron Pryor—77
3. Larry Holmes—72
4. Eusebio Pedroza—66
5. Hector Camacho—50
6. Jeff Chandler—47 (tie)
6. Ray Leonard—47 (tie)
8. Michael Spinks—45
9. Thomas Hearns—34
10. Donald Curry—26

1983 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—147
2. Aaron Pryor—93
3. Larry Holmes—91
4. Michael Spinks—66
5. Jeff Chandler—57
6. Thomas Hearns—45
7. Alexis Arguello—29
8. Wilfredo Gomez—28
9. Hector Camacho—24
10. Eusebio Pedroza—12

1982 POLL

1. Ray Leonard—142
2. Alexis Arguello—97
3. Marvin Hagler—76
4. Salvador Sanchez—72
5. Wilfred Benitez—68
6. Larry Holmes—61
7. Jeff Chandler—25
8. Eusebio Pedroza—18
9. Aaron Pryor—17
10. Thomas Hearns—14 (tie)
10. Dwight Muhammad Qawi—14 (tie)

1981 POLL

1. Thomas Hearns—116
2. Ray Leonard—108
3. Marvin Hagler—76
4. Larry Holmes—75
5. Alexis Arguello—62
6. Wilfredo Gomez—58
7. Eddie Mustafa Muhammad—28
8. Matthew Saad Muhammad—24
9. Wilfred Benitez—18
10. Roberto Duran—13 (tie)
10. Aaron Pryor—13 (tie)

1980 POLL

1. Roberto Duran—96
2. Ray Leonard—93
3. Wilfredo Gomez—88
4. Danny Lopez—65
5. Pipino Cuevas—54
6. Alexis Arguello—40
7. Larry Holmes—32
8. Wilfred Benitez—26
9. Vito Antuofermo—25 (tie)
9. Matthew Saad Muhammad—25 (tie)

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2007: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

A MONTH-BY-MONTH RECAP

Compiled by William Dettloff

It was significantly in vogue, when the year 2007 began, to predict that mixed martial arts would soon drive professional boxing into oblivion in the United States, and maybe even around the world, if it hadn't done so already. The snarkier of these doomsayers, with whose type boxing has repeatedly dealt over the generations, framed it in the context that boxing was ready to "tap out," in the vernacular of the mixed martial arts business. Clever, yes, but entirely inaccurate.

By the time the year ended, we had the richest prizefight in history, when better than 2 million sports fans paid good money to sit in their living rooms and watch the game's best fighter battle its most popular one in a sold-out arena in Las Vegas. We watched 30,000 fill a stadium in Wales for a fight between a champion and a television star, and then 50,000 more to see that champion take on his top challenger. Another mega-fight in Las Vegas sold out the MGM Grand in 30 minutes and inspired seemingly half of Manchester, England, to brave the cold winds over the Atlantic.

A Puerto Rican star filled Madison Square Garden not once, but twice, and a blue-collar banger from Youngstown, Ohio, thrilled the masses with power, aplomb, and potential. The high-level, top-shelf fights came one after the other: Cotto-Judah, Mayweather-De La Hoya, Marquez-Barrera, Calzaghe-Kessler, Pacquiao-Barrera II, Mayweather-Hatton, Marquez-Vazquez I and II, Pavlik-Taylor, Cotto-Mosley, and on. So steady was the onslaught, it almost was too much for the diehard fight fanatic to consume over a mere 12-month period.

Any year that productive is going to produce casualties, both literal and figurative. We have seen the last, presumably, of Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales, and, impossibly, Arturo Gatti, three of the most popular fighters of their era. We will see no more either of Diego "Chico" Corrales, who produced a whole library of highlights. It may be that we have seen the last of Sugar Shane Mosley in a prize ring. There are others.

But, as is always the case, there are those happy to take their places and eager for the chance to win our hearts. Some of them will succeed in the coming year, some of them won't. It will be our great honor to watch each of them try, and also to watch this wonderful, maddening sport, at once so beautiful and so heartbreaking, confound those who seek to proclaim it dead. Tap out, indeed.

January

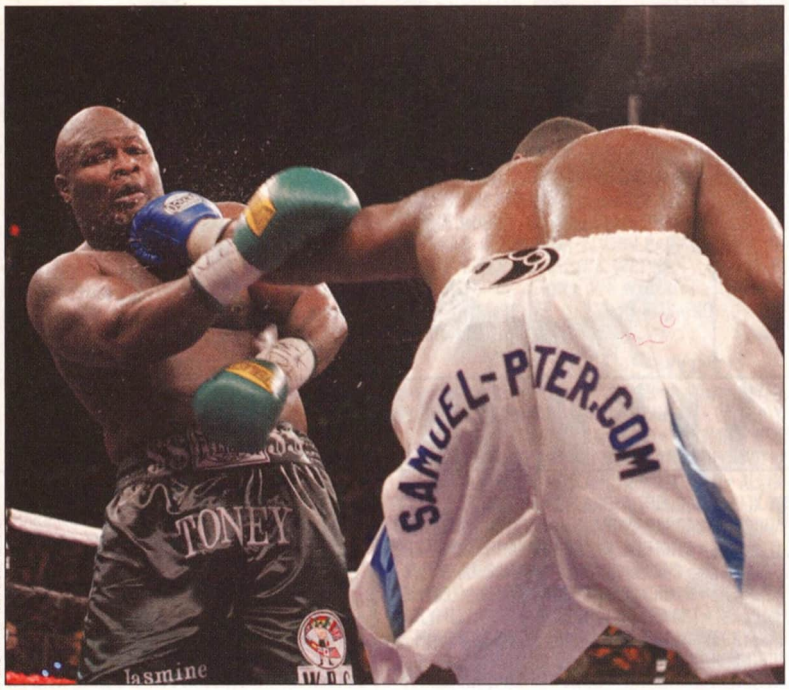


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

STORY OF THE MONTH

RUINED EXPECTATIONS

It seemed, for the most part, academic: All James Toney had to do to beat Sam Peter in their mysteriously mandated rematch was get in condition. That's all. Show a little self-control. Stop so much with the over-eating, do his pushups and his roadwork, spar a little, maybe jump some rope, and he'd be home free. After all, he'd shown up for the first match, which had taken place four months prior, with his customary three chins and still did well enough to convince many observers that he deserved the decision that went to Peter. Who knew what could happen if he got into reasonable shape? Toney fans had to be pleased, if a little bewildered, when he hired TV fitness guru Billy Blanks to whip him into shape; at least the subject was on his mind.

Peter? Who cared? We knew all we needed to know about him: big, young, strong, clumsy, good overhand right, in not much better shape than Toney, and physically incapable of bending at the knees or waist. He was what he was and was not going to get any better. Why would he? Big punchers never get any better, that's why they're punchers. They don't have to. As long as they can land, they'll win. No, he would be exactly the same guy he was in the first fight. It was all he could be. If the rematch had a different outcome it would be because Toney was better this time around. And by better we mostly meant less chubby. That's all it would take.

As it turned out, Toney might have been a little better. It was hard to tell with Peter beating his head like a gong for 12 rounds. We know he wasn't any slimmer; for all Blanks' talk about getting him into shape, Toney weighed in for the rematch at 249 pounds. Peter, on the other hand, at 234, was eight pounds lighter than he'd been for the first match, and from the start, whole universes better. He out-jabbed Toney. He hurt him badly in the first round, floored him in the second—with a jab, of all things—ripped him with uppercuts and straight rights, and even turned around and fought southpaw when Toney lay on the ropes trying to counterpunch. And it worked.There was never a moment in the rematch when it looked as though Toney might pull it out. Indeed, by the midway point, the larger question was if he'd last the distance. He did, of course, because even when you beat up James Toney you can't stop him. But the one-sidedness of the fight, as reflected in the scores—119-108 and 118-110 (twice)—told you all you needed to know about who had gotten better. It wasn't Toney. It was Peter, who had no business turning out to be something better than what we expected him to be. It went against the natural order of things.

Yvonne Durelle

IN OTHER NEWS

Nikolay Valuev retained the WBA heavyweight title with a third-round stoppage of American **Jameel McCline** in Basel, Switzerland ... Veteran HBO boxing announcer **Jim Lampley** was arrested by San Diego County sheriff's deputies on suspicion of domestic violence ... Former IBF super middleweight and WBC light heavyweight titleholder **Graciano Rocchigiani** began a nine-month jail sentence in Bielefelf-Senne, Germany, for a series of parole violations ... Former light heavyweight contender **Yvonne Durelle**, 77, died of a stroke and complications from Parkinson's disease in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada. ... After a two-year layoff, **Travis Simms** regained the

WBA junior middleweight title with a ninth-round kayo of **Jose Antonio Rivera** in Hollywood, Florida ... The New Jersey State Athletic Control Board announced that instant replay could be utilized during professional boxing matches to review a referee's judgment, but only if the promoter(s) of the card absorbed the expense for the necessary equipment ... Former Mike Tyson trainer **Kevin Rooney** was re-indicted by a Greene County, New York, grand jury on felony DWI charges ... Referee **Laurence Cole** was suspended for six months and fined $500 by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations for telling **Juan Manuel Marquez**, during Marquez' fight with **Jimrex Jaca**, that he was ahead on the scorecards ... **Ricky Hatton** retained the world junior welterweight title and won the IBF title with a decision win over tough **Juan Urango** in Las Vegas ... Former lightweight contender **Johnny Gonsalves**, 76, died in Castro Valley, California ... WBA/WBC super middleweight titleholder **Mikkel Kessler** became the first boxer in Danish history to win the nation's two top sports prizes. He was selected as Athlete of the Year by the newspaper *Jyllands Posten*, and also won the prestigious B.T. Gold award ... Former British and empire heavyweight champion **Johnny Williams**, 80, died in England.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
SAM PETER

What did Peter's win do for the heavyweight division? It more or less retired Toney, even if Toney didn't know it yet and still doesn't at this writing. It officially ended his days as a heavyweight threat, thereby moving the division forward just a bit toward something resembling clarity. Moreover, it placed Peter at the forefront of the list of young heavyweights on whose shoulders the future of the division may rest.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I know I'm not that young, but I'm still too young to die."

*—Sylvester Stallone on why he declined Mike Tyson's offer to play the role of Mason Dixon in **Rocky Balboa**, and gave the part to Antonio Tarver instead*

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Winner: Freddie Roach, who hit the lottery when Oscar De La Hoya chose him to be his head trainer for his upcoming bout against Floyd Mayweather, which would turn out to be the richest fight in history.

Loser: The WBC, which mandated that comebacking former champion Vitali Klitschko would receive a shot at its beltholder, Oleg Maskaev, before Sam Peter would, despite Peter's two consecutive wins over James Toney—both of which were sanctioned by the WBC as "elimination" fights.

FIGHT OF THE MONTH
JOSE LUIS CASTILLO W 12 HERMAN NGOUDJO

You knew Castillo would start slowly after nearly a year off following the cancellation of his third fight with the Diego Corrales. That gave the underdog Ngoudjo the head start he needed. He jumped off to a quick lead, out-maneuvering Castillo and out-hustling him. But Castillo warmed up midway through and chased Ngoudjo down the stretch, which led to some excellent exchanges and a bit of drama before the judges' scores of 113-115 and 115-113 (twice) were announced in Castillo's favor.

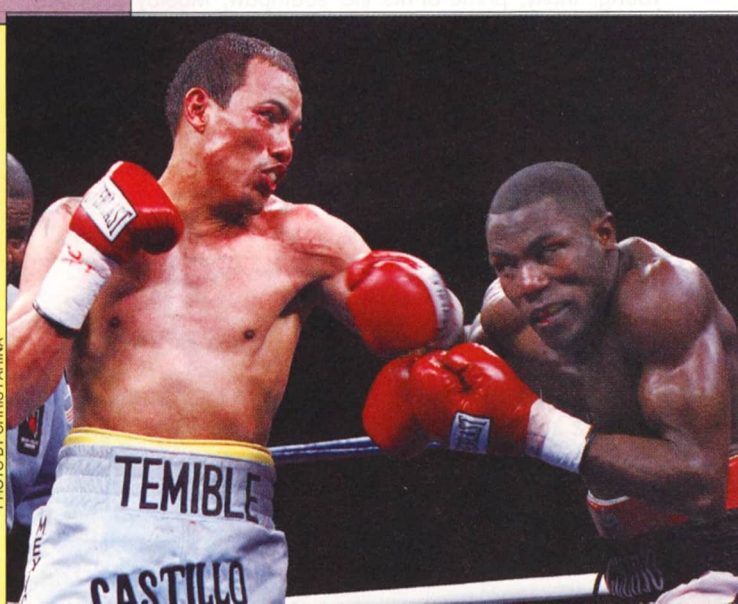


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

February

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

STORY OF THE MONTH

SUGAR SHANE: NOT DONE YET

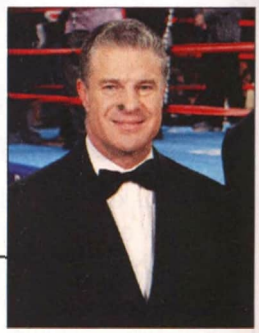
It started in July 2006, when Shane Mosley, bouncing around on legs that looked a lot younger than they were supposed to be, got up on the balls of his feet and knocked Fernando Vargas flat with a sweeping left hook. It had been a long time since Mosley had moved that way, and the definitive manner in which Vargas flopped to the mat suggested that somehow it was 1997 again, and that Mosley was still one of the best and most dynamic fighters in the world.

It wasn't 1997, of course. Mosley and Vargas were junior middleweights. Mosley was 35 years old, and Vargas so sorely spent and dilapidated that those of us reluctant to celebrate a popular prizefighter's purported rejuvenation held out for something more affirmative. Against Luis Collazo, a young, tricky, prime-of-his life southpaw, Mosley provided that affirmation, more or less, and gave momentum to the silly notion that maybe 35 really was the new 25.

Collazo, after all, was no shot Fernando Vargas. Just 25 years old and two fights removed from giving Ricky Hatton all kinds of hell, he seemed just the right guy to remind Mosley—if Winky Wright hadn't already—that it was a new century, and one in which even guys not named Vernon Forrest would have his number. His job, as far as we were concerned, was to tell us if Mosley had really regained some form, if the spunk he showed against Vargas was the effect of having reinserted his father as head trainer, and a renewed vigor, or solely the result of Vargas' desiccated state. After all, even the Mosley who had beaten David Estrada and Jose Luis Cruz looked nothing like the fighter who had gone through Oscar De La Hoya and all those lightweights so many years before. It was reasonable to believe that that Mosley was long gone and wouldn't be seen again. Generally, 35-year-old fighters don't regain lost form.

Mosley's unanimous decision win by the whitewash scores of 119-108 and 118-109 (twice) seemed to indicate that they can. It helped in no small amount that for the first time in a long while, Mosley, never more than a welterweight and a smallish one at that, actually was fighting another welterweight. It was the weight at which he should have been fighting all along, a fact he acknowledged and about which he was fairly giddy afterward. "It felt good to be a welterweight again," he said. "I felt light on my feet. I want to keep myself in shape and maybe fight again in June. I am going to keep myself in shape and tuned up."

Except for a moment in the second when Collazo rocked him, Mosley dominated and even floored an off-balance Collazo in the 11th. In addition to providing the kind of warm glow we all get when a well-liked and respected older guy shows he has something left, the win put Mosley back into the welterweight title mix. Whether or not he would go anywhere after Collazo, we didn't know. We only knew that he wasn't as gone as we thought he was, that there still was some "Sugar" in him and that it wasn't always better to be the younger guy after all. Sometimes it was okay to be older. Sometimes it didn't matter a lick.



Jim Lampley

IN OTHER NEWS

In Kissimmee, Florida, **Julio Diaz** stopped **Jesus Chavez** in the third round to win the IBF lightweight title ... Japanese promoter **Hiroaki Tsuda** died of pneumonia in Osaka, Japan. He was 62 years old ... Former flyweight and bantamweight world champion **Fighting Harada** beat out former WBC/WBA junior middleweight titleholder **Koichi Wajima** to become president of the Japan Pro Boxing Association ... Again in Kissimmee, **Cory Spinks** defended the IBF junior middleweight title

with a decision over **Rodney Jones** ... Manager **Bob Botto** died of a heart attack in Swedesboro, New Jersey. He was 73 ... HBO's **Jim Lampley** was sentenced to three years probation, 52 weeks of counseling, and 40 hours of community service after pleading no contest to violating a restraining order, stemming from a domestic violence case ... **Lovemore N'dou** won the vacant IBF junior welterweight title with an 11th-round kayo of **Naoufel Ben Rabah** in Sydney, Australia ... Former middleweight and super middleweight titleholder **Chris Eubank** was arrested for breaching the peace after driving through the streets of Whitehall, London, to protest Britain's involvement in the war in Iraq and Prince Harry's impending deployment to Iraq as a member of Blues and Royals regiment ... The WBA reinstated **Javier Castillejo** as its middleweight titleholder after **Mariano Carrera** tested positive for the banned substance Clembuterol after dethroning Castillejo in December '06. Carrera also was suspended for six months ... **Robert Guerrero** won the vacant IBF featherweight title with a ninth-round stoppage of **Spend Abazi** in Copenhagen, Denmark ... Trainer and journalist **Theo Mthembu**, who trained Baby Jake Matlala, among others, died in South Africa. He was 80 years old.

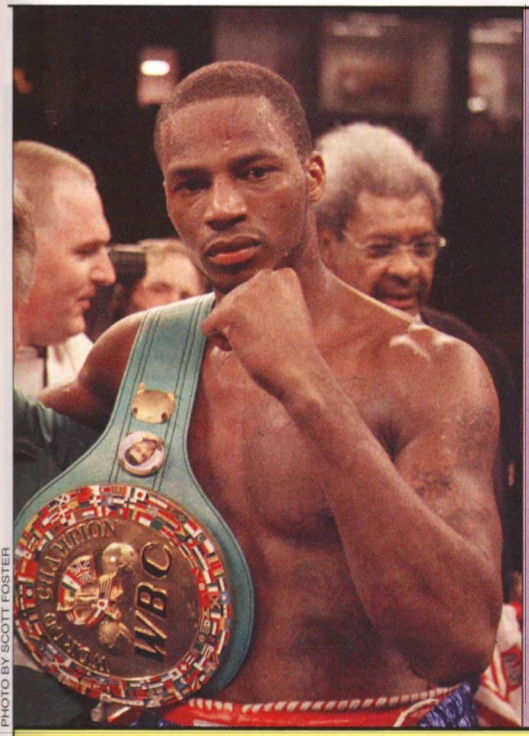


PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
CHAD DAWSON

Dawson might have been a slight underdog to undefeated, battle-hardened Tomasz Adamek when they met in Kissimmee, Florida, but he wasn't exactly unknown. The New England fight community had been touting him for several years, and in his biggest moment he stepped up, climbing off the canvas in the 10th round and cruising to a unanimous decision win.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I've been hitting people for 20 years, and this is therapy for me. A lot of people, I want to hit the hell out of them, so I just take it to the ring."

—Bernard Hopkins on why he wants to continue fighting

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Winner: Undefeated middleweight contender Kelly Pavlik, who in his first big HBO fight crushed the durable Jose Luis Zertuche in eight rounds to set up an elimination fight with fellow bomb-thrower Edison Miranda.

Loser: Former top heavyweight contender Tommy Morrison, who successfully lobbied the State of West Virgina for a boxing license, then refused on-camera to name the lab whose tests purportedly showed he was not infected with the virus that causes AIDS.

FIGHT OF THE MONTH
EDDIE CHAMBERS KO 7 DERRICK ROSSY

It's always refreshing and also validating in some way when a smaller, faster, cerebral type heavyweight takes apart a bigger, stronger, maybe harder-hitting one. It reaffirms the truism that this is really about skills and smarts and not brawn. Chambers used fast hands, deft head movement, and good, old-fashioned smarts to chop up and outfight Rossy, who put in a hard effort in a fast-paced, entertaining heavyweight scrap.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

March

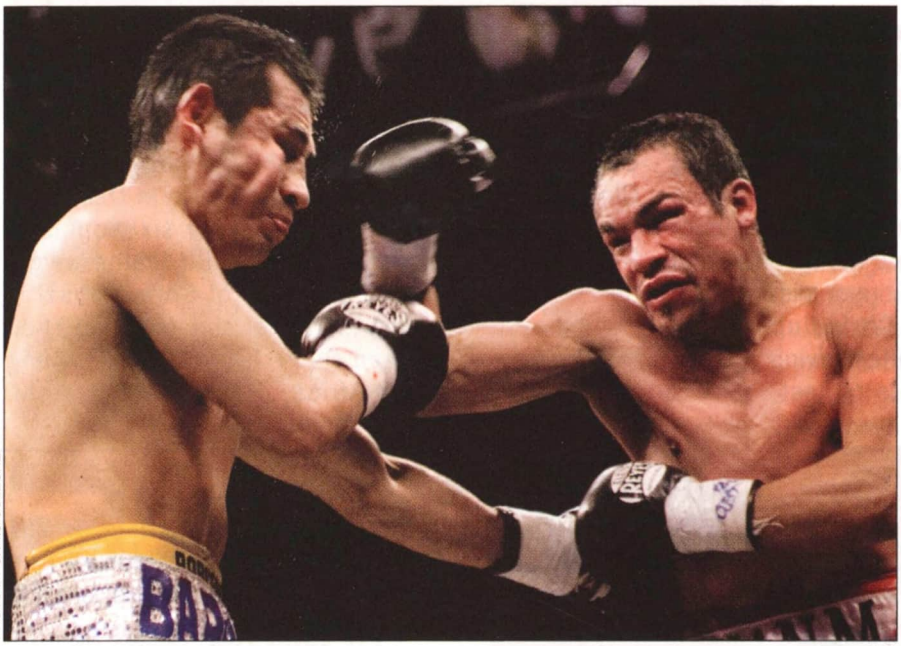


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE

STORY OF THE MONTH

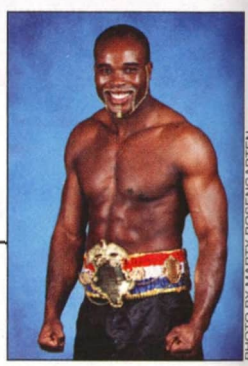
BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

You always got the sense it would happen sooner or later for Juan Manuel Marquez. He was too good to go his entire career being remembered as the guy who lost to Freddy Norwood, too good to be just the guy who got off the floor to hold Manny Pacquiao to a draw. Definitely too good to be remembered as the guy who went to Borneo Island and lost to Chris John for $25,000. So it felt right when he outpointed one of the bigger stars of his era in the great Marco Antonio Barrera. It had been a long time coming.

You could argue some of the luster was taken off it because Barrera clearly was at the tail end of a long career and everyone knew it going in. Barrera's safety-first decision over Rocky Juarez in their rematch last time out didn't fool anyone. We all knew Marquez was a much trickier proposition for Barrera, that while Juarez could be tamed into submission with a good, hard jab, Marquez was good enough to outbox the master boxer, maybe even on his best night. For that reason alone you had to give Barrera credit for facing him at all. He could have retired after the Juarez fight and no one would have blamed him.

So 8,127 fans filed into the Mandalay Bay to watch a legend at the end of his career against one who could have been legend but started too late, or never got sufficiently going, or didn't get the breaks when he needed them. Whatever the case, Marquez recognized the opportunity before him and fought well and hard, too well and hard for this 33-year-old version of Barrera, who wasn't quite sure whether to box or slug. Marquez did a bit of both, too, but his hands were faster, his combinations tighter, his concentration keener.

Maybe the scores were unfairly lopsided at 118-109 and 116-111 (twice). But it was Marquez' fight throughout. Not by a lot, by just enough in most rounds, except for a brief moment in the seventh when Barrera, clearly stunned himself, floored Marquez with a right to the jaw, a knockdown that referee Jay Nady inexplicably missed. He didn't miss the shot Barrera landed while Marquez was down, naturally, and took a point that Barrera could ill-afford. It hardly mattered. Marquez, though chronologically five months older than Barrera, hadn't tasted yet what Barrera had already grown bored of, hadn't made the money yet that Barrera had already invested. Barrera had already had his turn, made his money, and fought his wars. Ask Erik Morales. Those things were still in front of Marquez, still waiting for him. Against Barrera, he finally got after them.



IN OTHER NEWS

In Mannheim, Germany, IBF heavyweight beltholder **Wladimir Klitschko** stopped mandatory challenger **Ray Austin** in two rounds ... IBF flyweight beltholder **Vic Darchinyan** kayoed **Victor Burgos** in the 12th round in Carson, California. Burgos lost consciousness after the bout and was hospitalized with a brain injury ... Trainer **Manuel "Chato" Robles Sr.** died due to complications of pneumonia in California ... In San Juan, Puerto Rico, **Miguel Cotto** defended the WBA welterweight title with an 11th-round stoppage of challenger **Oktay Urkal** ... In Levallois Perret, France, **Jean-Marc Mormeck** decisioned **O'Neil Bell** to regain the world cruiserweight championship ... **Mikkel Kessler** defended the WBA/WBC super middleweight titles with a 12-round drubbing of challenger **Librado Andrade** in Copenhagen,

Denmark ... Former lightweight contender **Joey Olguin**, 66, died of cancer in Albuquerque, New Mexico ... Former heavyweight champion **Evander Holyfield** continued his comeback with a third-round stoppage of journeyman **Vinny Madalone** in Corpus Christi, Texas. Holyfield also was implicated in a steroids investigation ... WBA bantamweight titleholder **Wladimir Sidorenko** fought to a draw with challenger **Ricardo Cordoba** in Stuttgart, Germany ... In Hollywood, Florida, **Celestino Caballero** retained the WBA super bantamweight title when challenger **Ricardo Castillo** was disqualified in the ninth round ... Former junior bantamweight, bantamweight, and featherweight titleholder **Johnny Tapia** was hospitalized in Albuquerque, New Mexico, following a cocaine overdose ... **Takefumi Sakata** stopped **Lorenzo Parra** in three rounds in Tokyo, Japan to claim the WBA flyweight title ... **Chris John** retained the WBA featherweight title with a 12-round decision over challenger **Jose Rojas** in Jakarta, Indonesia ... Former bantamweight and super bantamweight contender **Nestor "Baba" Jimenez**, 60, died in Cartagena, Colombia ... **Alejandro Berrio** stopped **Robert Stieglitz** in three rounds in Rostock, Germany to claim the vacant IBF super middleweight title ... **Souleyman M'baye** retained the WBA junior welterweight title with a draw against **Andreas Kotelnik** in Liverpool, England ... Indonesian junior lightweight **Anis Dwi Mulya**, 27, died in Jakarta, five days after suffering a brain injury in a sixth-round knockout defeat against **Irvan Bone**.

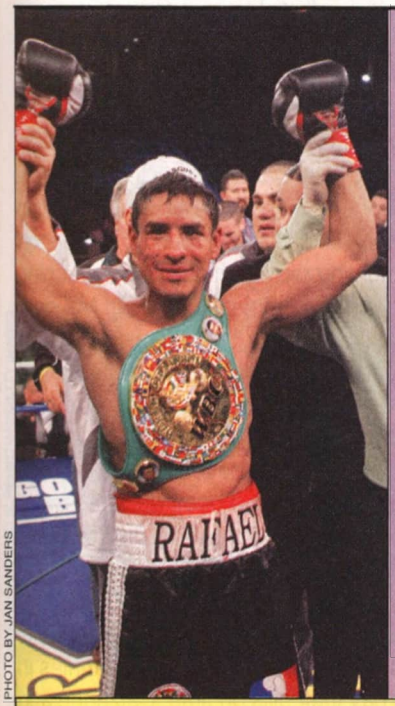


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
RAFAEL MARQUEZ

It was difficult to imagine Marquez looking better than he did in his last several outings, especially against a juggernaut like Israel Vazquez. But look better he did, blasting away at Vazquez with pinpoint punches so perfectly delivered it looked like the text book had come to life. Sure, Vazquez dropped him in the third, but for about every other second, Marquez was flawless, hammering Vazquez' nose into a lumpy, swollen mess.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Although I'm flattered that the boxing community is eager to have me back in the ring, I have no plans to return ... I will remain retired."

—Former heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis responding to rumors that he would return to face Vitali Klitschko

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Winner: Steve Forbes, who handled with dignity and class one of the more blatant robberies in recent years when Las Vegas judges Robert Hoyle, Glenn Trowbridge, and Dalby Shirley scored his fight with Demetrius Hopkins overwhelmingly for Hopkins. Most had seen a very close fight that could easily have gone in Forbes' favor.

Loser: Nevada State Athletic Commissioner Keith Kizer, who replied to Larry Merchant's on-air yes-or-no question about instant reply with 30 seconds of double-talk and subterfuge.

FIGHT OF THE MONTH
RAFAEL MARQUEZ KO 7 ISRAEL VAZQUEZ

Everyone knows how rare it is that expectations are exceeded by the fights that create them, but that was the case here. Operating at a wonderfully high skill level, Marquez and Vazquez banged away at one another from the opening bell. Vazquez' nose swelled up almost immediately, and Marquez was dropped in the third round. From the opening bell until the last, it was an instant classic.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

April

PHOTO BY CHRIS YOUNG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

STORY OF THE MONTH

THERE'S REALITY, AND THEN THERE'S REALITY

It was the perfect fusing of the almost comically similar businesses of showbiz and prizefighting: an undefeated, respected, reigning world champion against a comparative novice who came into prominence not by paying heavy dues in small casino or clubfights against similarly experienced brawlers, but over the course of his participation in a reality television series called *The Contender*. We'd say it couldn't have been scripted better if Sly Stallone had penned it, but in a sense he did, as it was he who lent his considerable if aged star power to the series to help get it off the ground in the first place.

None of that is to disparage Peter Manfredo, who rode the power that is prime time television programming straight to Millennium Stadium in Wales in front of 35,018 Welshmen. Well, not *straight* there—there were several stops along the way: close losses to Sergio Mora, and a pair of wins over Scott Pemberton and Joey Spina, two moderately skilled pugs more on Manfredo's level, or, as it tuned out, just below it.

It was hardly adequate preparation for a meeting with super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe, recent conqueror of Jeff Lacy in a career-defining performance, which was followed with a win over Sakio Bika, who, coincidentally, would go on to win the "championship" in the very series that launched Manfredo's odd trip across the Atlantic. At any rate, you had to suspect that all along both Calzaghe and Manfredo, being actual fighters and therefore emotionally immune to the vulgar influences of pomp and promotion, knew precisely what would happen when they entered the ring against one another. You even could argue that the fans did as well, which is precisely why they showed up in such numbers. An execution, particularly when performed by a swashbuckling hometown hero, is as at least as much fun as a fistfight.

Unfortunately, the fans got neither. Manfredo reacted to the large crowd and the miles-better fighter before him by freezing, the way one might when finding oneself in the path of an oncoming and unsympathetic train. Calzaghe reacted to that the way a seasoned professional is supposed to, even if his execution was poor. After two more or less uneventful rounds, he trapped Manfredo on the ropes and whizzed about 40 punches at him, which Manfredo took as a sign to commence ducking. Maybe a third of the punches actually touched skin, but the sheer volume of them, coupled with Manfredo's evidently burgeoning affection for defensive acumen at the expense of offense, convinced referee Terry O'Connor, apparently, that Manfredo's very life was in peril. He stopped it precisely halfway through the round.

You'd have thought that it would have been seen afterward as a large charade and would thus have generated the appropriate level of outrage. After all, a guy who's been around as long as Calzaghe against a pug of Manfredo's ilk. They very idea of it! But this is prizefighting, where the point of all the fighting is to get hearts in hand and fannies in seats so all involved can pay their bills on time. Calzaghe and Manfredo were simply along for the ride, aware as they were that they were just part of a much bigger show, over whose development they had little, if any, control.

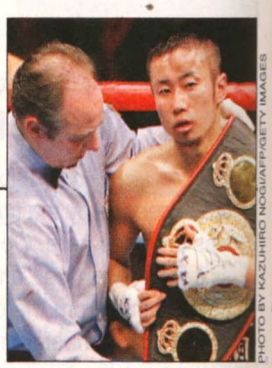


PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Yutaka Niida

IN OTHER NEWS

After a slow start, **Manny Pacquiao** came on to stop **Jorge Solis** in the eighth round in San Antonio, Texas ... Former heavyweight **Reagan "Buddy" Turman**, 73, died of hepatitis and cirrhosis of the liver in Longview, Texas ... Former heavyweight champion **Mike Tyson** left a drug rehab facility in California to appear in Maricopa County Superior Court in Mesa, Arizona, to plead not guilty to

felony drug possession charges related to a December 2006 incident in which he was stopped and arrested outside a nightclub ... **Ruslan Chagaev** decisioned **Nicolay Valuev** in Stuttgart, Germany, to win the WBA heavyweight title ... Welterweight contender **Joshua Clottey** decisioned former lightweight champion **Diego Corrales** over 10 rounds in Springfield, Missouri ... Former world heavyweight champion **Joe Frazier** filed a lawsuit against his daughter, **Jacqueline Frazier-Lyde**, for the return of documents in her possession from when she served as her father's lawyer and business advisor from 1989 to 2004. Frazier dropped the suit soon after it became public knowledge ... **Pongsaklek Wonjongkam** stopped **Tomonobu Shimizu** in the seventh round in Saraburi, Thailand, to retain the WBC flyweight title ... Former IBF heavyweight beltholder **Chris Byrd** stopped **Paul Marinacchio** in seven rounds in Nassau, Bahamas ... **Felix Sturm** regained the WBA middleweight title by outpointing **Javier Castillejo** in Stuttgart, Germany ... **Mzonke Fana** decisioned **Malcolm Klassen** over 12 rounds in Khayelitsha, South Africa, to win the IBF super featherweight title ... **Yutaka Niida** defended the WBA minimumweight title by decisioning **Katsunari Takayama** in Tokyo, Japan ... In Stuttgart, Germany, **Stipe Drew** won the WBA light heavyweight title with a decision win over **Silvio Branco** ... Japanese promoter/manager **Tetsuro Kawi**, 68, died of liver cancer in Yokohama.

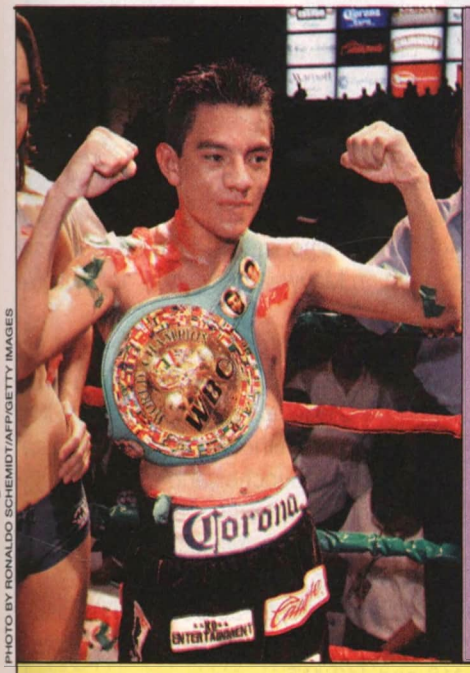


PHOTO BY RONALDO SCHEMIDT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
CRISTIAN MIJARES

With all the attention Jorge Arce had been getting from American cable networks over the last couple years, it was easy to look past Mijares in advance of their meeting for the WBC super flyweight title. Arce was the attraction, but Mijares was the fighter, boxing Arce silly from the opening bell and cruising to a bloody and lopsided unanimous decision win.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"There is no reason for me to put myself into a coffin."

—Heavyweight Nicolay Valuev, commenting on his 12-round decision loss to Ruslan Chagaev

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Winner: Former IBF junior middleweight titleholder Kassim Ouma, who received a pardon for deserting the army from the Ugandan embassy in Washington, D.C. The pardon enabled Ouma to return to his homeland without fear of arrest.

Loser: Acelino Freitas, who appeared to make just a perfunctory effort to win against lightweight titleholder Juan Diaz before quitting on his stool after the eighth round, and then, oddly smiling broadly afterward.

FIGHT OF THE MONTH
EDGAR SOSA W 12 BRIAN VILORIA

The opening bout on a pay-per-view show is rarely compelling, but this opener to the Manny Pacquiao-Jorge Solis show was the exception. Easily the best fight on the card, it featured Sosa and Viloria meeting for the vacant WBC light flyweight title and trading bombs for all 12 rounds, at a pretty high skill level. Neither fighter slowed down or gave an inch through 36 minutes of hard fighting. Good stuff.

PHOTO BY PAUL J. RICHARDS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

May

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

STORY OF THE MONTH

THE FIGHT TO SAVE BOXING

It wasn't enough that the Floyd Mayweather-Oscar De La Hoya junior middleweight alphabet title fight represented a meeting of the world's best fighter and its most popular one. In an age when every event and most stories are seen as insignificant unless they carry far-reaching implications, this was the fight "to save boxing." That was the theme of nearly every piece written or reported by the mainstream media and a fair number of those coming out of the boxing media, which one would think should know better.

Those paying attention know that no business concern can live or die on a single event. To say that a single fight could save boxing—if indeed it required "saving" at all—is to say that a single game could save baseball or football or basketball. It's illogical. The best any single contest can do is provide a short-term boost. It is up to the business to proceed from there.

That said, the Mayweather-De La Hoya fight provided a formidable boost. Aided by a promotional push from HBO that was unprecedented for a prizefight, the event shattered all records: 2.4 million pay-per-view buys and $134.4-million in domestic PPV revenue, bringing the total revenue for the event to approximately $165-million. The sold-out crowd of 16,700 at the MGM Grand produced a live gate of $19-million. The MGM Mirage properties sold 25,000 closed-circuit tickets and scalpers were getting four times the face value of $50 tickets. The weigh-in alone drew 7,000 spectators.

Much of the success was attributed to HBO's excellent *24/7* documentary, whose episodes were compellingly produced and directed and contained behind-the-scenes footage of the type rarely seen in coverage of the sport. The drama evident in the Mayweather clan alone was as good as any soap opera on television. But it couldn't account for all of the event's success. There still was a fight to be made and to be played out, and the fans who watched did so to see the two trade blows and not, in Mayweather's case, to squabble with his father.

As so often happens, the fight itself fell short of the expectations the hype created for it. Mayweather is a boxer by nature after all, and De La Hoya has never been the kind of fighter that creates real drama in the ring against a classical boxer. At his best as a counterpuncher and forced into the uncomfortable role of aggressor, he was bound to be less successful than he would have liked. A tactical fight was likely and that is largely what it was, and that, of course, favored Mayweather. That De La Hoya kept it as close as he did was noteworthy. The split decision in Mayweather's favor by scores of 116-112, 115-113 and 113-115 was perfectly acceptable, and overall the event produced the kind of atmosphere one can find only in boxing—still. Saving, indeed.

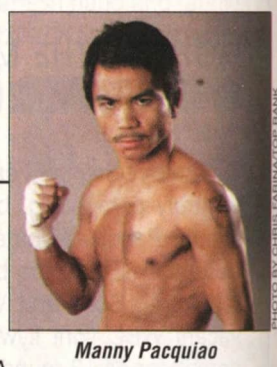


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Manny Pacquiao

IN OTHER NEWS

Former world lightweight champion **Diego Corrales** was killed in a motorcycle crash in Las Vegas ... **Arthur Abraham** retained the IBF middleweight title with a third-round stoppage of **Sebastien Demers** in Bamberg, Germany ... HBO CEO **Chris Albrecht** resigned following his arrest for allegedly abusing his girlfriend, **Karla Jensen**, outside of the MGM Grand following the **Floyd Mayweather-Oscar De La Hoya** fight ... In Tokyo, Japan, **Edwin Valero** retained the WBA super featherweight title with an eighth-round kayo of **Nobuhito Honmo** ... **Johnny Tapia** pleaded guilty to felony drug possession in Albuquerque, New Mexico ...

Steve Cunningham won the IBF cruiserweight title by outpointing **Krzysztof Wlodarcyzk** in Slaskie, Poland ... Former IBF and WBC junior flyweight titleholder **Michael Carbajal** was arrested on suspicion of threatening a Phoenix, Arizona, police officer and a liquor violation ... **Alexander Munoz** decisioned **Nobuo Nashiro** to retain the WBA super flyweight title in Tokyo ... In Las Vegas, **Hugo Cazares** stopped **Wilfrido Perez** in the second round to retain the world junior flyweight championship ... Legendary Philadelphia middleweight **Bennie Briscoe** was inducted into the Pennsylvania Boxing Hall of Fame ... Former IBF light heavyweight and WBA cruiserweight titleholder **Bobby Czyz** was hospitalized following a serious car accident in New Jersey ... Canadian light heavyweight **Adrian Diaconu** electrified an ESPN2 viewing audience with a sparkling third-round kayo of **Rico Hoye** in Montreal, Quebec ... **Jose Miguel Cotto** and **Prawet Singwangcha** fought to a draw while contesting for the vacant WBA lightweight belt in Salinas, Puerto Rico ... **Hozumi Hasegawa** retained the WBC bantamweight title with a decision over **Simpiwe Vetyeka** in Tokyo ... Incumbent **Darlene Antonino-Custodio** defeated **Manny Pacquiao** in an election for a congressional seat in the South Cotabato district of the Philippines ... **Ulises Solis** successfully defended the IBF junior flyweight title by stopping **Jose Aguirre** in the ninth round in Guadalajara, Mexico ... Former WBC bantamweight titleholder **Carlos Zarate**, 56, suffered a heart attack and was hospitalized.

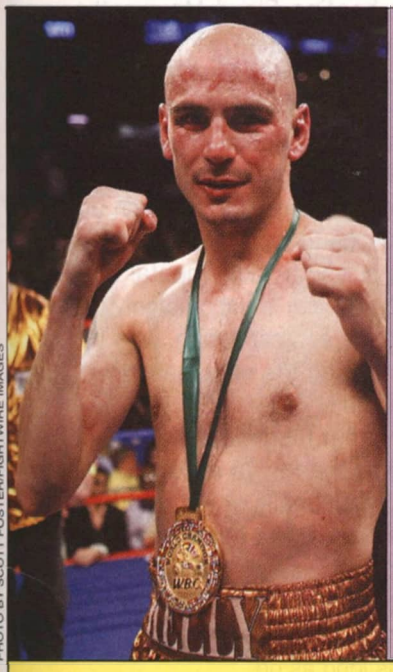


PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
KELLY PAVLIK

Despite his exciting kayo of Jose Luis Zertuche last time out, many were still skeptical of Pavlik's real value going into his match with the more proven Edison Miranda. Miranda, after all, had at least beaten Allen Green and gone to war with Arthur Abraham. Pavlik had no such credentials. But he had the skill and self-belief to stop Miranda, and by using the most daring tactic one can try against a puncher: aggression.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I guess it wasn't the night of the jab."

—Oscar De La Hoya, when asked why he stopped jabbing during his loss to Floyd Mayweather, after having success with it early in the fight

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Winner: Mark Taffet, HBO senior vice president for sports operations and pay-per-view, for whom the Mayweather-De La Hoya extravaganza represented the equivalent of a grand slam homerun.

Loser: Anyone unfortunate enough to have sat through all 12 rounds of middleweight champion Jermain Taylor's HBO-televised and mind-numbingly dull decision over Cory Spinks in Memphis, Tennessee.

FIGHT OF THE MONTH
KELLY PAVLIK KO 7 EDISON MIRANDA

If Pavlik goes on to have a highly successful career as a champion, this fight will be recalled only as his first major win over a serious contender. It was more than that. Although Pavlik seemed in control throughout, Miranda pushed him hard and there were several rounds during which the two slammed away at one another with abandon. It was as stirring a slugfest as you could ask for between two top middleweight contenders and ended the way such a fight should—with one fighter concussed and the crowd on its feet.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

June

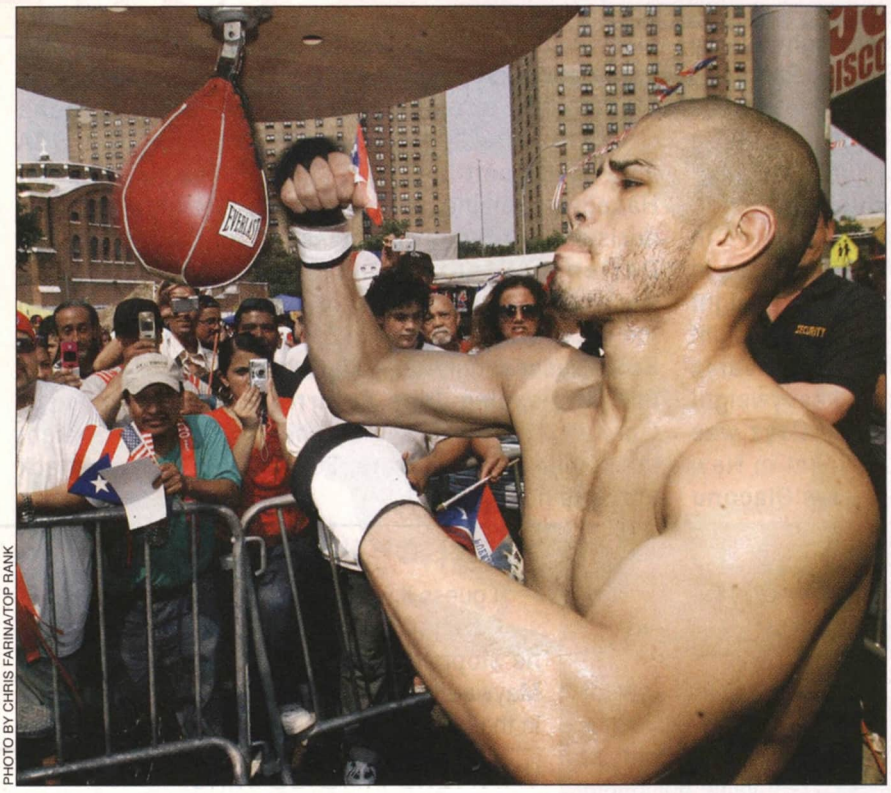


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

STORY OF THE MONTH

SUMMER IN THE CITY

You would have thought it was the 1970s in New York again the way the city was buzzing around the impending Miguel Cotto-Zab Judah fight. A big fight at The Garden, fans everywhere, filling the subways and barbershops and newsstands with talk of the big fight. You had to credit Bob Arum and Top Rank for playing to their strengths and for moving Cotto at the right pace and maximizing his visibility. Many times when a fighter is that lovingly promoted it means he's hiding something or lacking something that will come to haunt him down the line. And those guys always get found out eventually.

Top Rank as a rule misses no opportunities to sell, especially with Cotto. The Judah fight represented Cotto's third consecutive fight on the eve of the city's annual Puerto Rican Day parade, and it paid off: A capacity crowd of 20,684 filled Madison Square Garden and generated $2.5-million at the gate. That made it the biggest fight in New York since Bernard Hopkins whipped Felix Trinidad in 2001. It even sold more tickets than did Trinidad's knockout of Ricardo Mayorga in October of '04.

You couldn't blame Judah for feeling a bit lost in it all. The fans weren't there to see him, after all, despite his bizarre prefight declarations that he had more fans in New York than did Cotto. Seeing as how he calls Brooklyn home, you could understand why he wished it were so. It was not. In any event, he had enough to worry about without counting seats. Two fights removed from the beating Floyd Mayweather gave him—not to mention the subsequent fine and suspension levied by the Nevada State Athletic Commission—Judah desperately needed a win here and he knew it. His great singular problem was the same one held by each of Cotto's previous 29 opponents: Cotto himself. His strength, skill, mental toughness, and stoicism is uncommonly found and was in abundant evidence against Judah, who frequently has been accused of lacking the very mental toughness Cotto has so often exhibited.

Cotto had to call on that toughness in the first round when a Judah uppercut appeared to rock him to his core. He weathered it and, intentionally or not, drove Judah to the canvas with a low blow. What followed over the next 10 rounds was typical Cotto, as he bullied, mauled, beat up, and brutalized Judah before referee Arthur Mercante Jr. stopped it 49 seconds into the 11th. Judah, for his part, proved by hanging in as long as he did that he had some fortitude after all. And to the great relief of a city and of all those would-be parade-goers, Cotto demonstrated once again that even better fighters benefit from smart promotion. It's not just for phonies anymore.

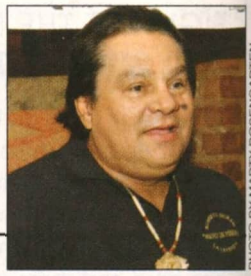


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Roberto Duran

IN OTHER NEWS

Ricky Hatton stopped former world lightweight champion **Jose Luis Castillo** in the fourth round in Las Vegas to retain the world junior welterweight championship ... **Eagle Kyowa** retained the WBC strawweight title by outpointing **Akira Yaegashi** in Yokohama, Japan ... Princeton University awarded **Muhammad Ali** an honorary doctorate of humanities ... The California State Athletic Commission suspended **James Toney** and **Danny Batchelder** for a year and fined both men $2,500 after testing positive for steroids

following their bout in San Jose, California ... In Hartford, Connecticut, WBC light heavyweight beltholder **Chad Dawson** stopped challenger **Jesus Ruiz** in six rounds ... Former IBF cruiserweight titleholder **Kelvin Davis** fractured his neck and broke bones in his back in a 30-feet fall off of a bridge while doing roadwork near Auckland, New Zealand ... **Juan Carlos Reveco** stopped **Nethra Sasiprapa** in the eighth round in Mendoza, Argentina to win the vacant WBA junior flyweight title ... Rival promotional companies **Top Rank** and **Golden Boy Promotions** reached a settlement of various legal disputes pertaining to junior lightweight **Manny Pacquiao** ... In Stuttgart, Germany, **Felix Sturm** decisioned **Noe Tulio Gonzalez Alcoba** in defense of the WBA middleweight title ... Tests conducted on the body of **Diego Corrales** revealed that he had a blood alcohol level three times the legal limit when he crashed his motorcycle and died in Las Vegas ... **Roberto Duran**, **Ricardo Lopez**, **Pernell Whitaker**, and, inexplicably, **Jose Sulaiman** were among those inducted into the International Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York ... The British Boxing Board of Control denied former heavyweight titleholder **Tim Witherspoon**'s application for a boxing license ... Former featherweight contender **Scott Harrison** was accused of assault following an altercation at a brothel in Spain ... **Wladimir Sidorenko** stopped **Jerome Arnould** in seven rounds in Marseille, France, to retain the WBA bantamweight title ... Former world middleweight champion **Hugo Corro**, 53, died of a pulmonary illness in Mendoza, Argentina.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
PAUL MALIGNAGGI

Anyone who saw the beating Malignaggi took against Miguel Cotto in June 2006 knew one thing about him and suspected another: He was tougher than anyone had thought, and he might never be the same fighter again. By comprehensively decisioning Lovemore N'dou in Uncasville, Connecticut, to win the IBF junior welterweight title, just two fights removed from the Cotto beating, Malignaggi validated the former thought and entirely disproved the latter. Good for him.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"You saw more action in four rounds tonight than you've seen from Floyd [Mayweather] throughout his whole career."

—Ricky Hatton after stopping Jose Luis Castillo in the fourth round

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Winner: Long-time HBO analyst Larry Merchant, whose planned dismissal from the cable giant's boxing telecasts was canceled following an outcry by the boxing media.

Loser: Heavyweight contender Shannon Briggs, who surprised absolutely no one by blaming his dismal showing in a decision loss to Sultan Ibragimov on a previously undisclosed case of walking pneumonia.

FIGHT OF THE MONTH
MIGUEL COTTO KO 11 ZAB JUDAH

Many big fights are not good fights. This was both. It might have been better for Cotto in the long term had he blown Judah out quickly, the way Kostya Tszyu did in Judah's infamous loss in November 2001. But this was a competitive, exciting, grinding struggle whose outcome didn't appear certain until the last couple of rounds. Both guys came out looking like they'd stuck their faces in a wood chipper.

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

July

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

STORY OF THE MONTH

OLD MAN RIVER JUST KEEPS ROLLING ALONG

You couldn't blame even the geekiest of boxing geeks for yawning when this one was put together. We could almost hear them ask, collectively: "Are you sure? Hopkins and Wright? *Bernard* Hopkins and *Winky* Wright? Those two guys—against one another?" Yes, came the answer, and then the giant promotions machine in the sky started to do its thing, undiscouraged by predictions of an empty arena, pay-per-view buys in the negatives, and judges falling asleep at ringside. It went on, as it should have. Fights between two high-quality fighters needn't promise thrills and spills to warrant their doing any more than the nightly news has to feature the latest goings-on involving Britney Spears. Some fights should be made simply because, well, they can be. Fun, you learn by a certain age, frequently is overrated.

This one could be made only because the one Hopkins preferred, against heavyweight beltholder Oleg Maskaev, couldn't be. Hopkins settled on Wright and the unique challenges he presents, and when it was done we were reminded, in case we had forgotten, why B-Hop occupies the unique place that he does among contemporary prizefighters and also even among the old-timers. Hopkins' unanimous decision win, by scores of 116-112 and 117-111 (twice), represented a study in guile and smarts, of wisdom and deception, largely because, on physicality alone, Hopkins, a remarkably well-preserved 42 years old but 42 years old nonetheless, wasn't going to get it done.

The fact that Hopkins overcame 2-1 odds and neutralized everything about Wright that makes him a nightmare for mere mortals didn't render the fight especially compelling, even, we would imagine, to the 8,626 brave and patient souls who took a chance and attended at the Mandalay Bay Event Center. They would have been well advised to bring their pillows. Even magic can be boring when you're not in on the magician's secrets, and it takes an educated and patient eye to find reasons to appreciate subtle genius, especially in a prize ring.

By the end, one was moved to feel badly for Wright. Not because he lost a fight for the world light heavyweight championship, and not because Hopkins sliced up his left eye like one might a Jersey tomato. And not even because he had to feel for weeks afterward the assorted bumps, scrapes, knots, and other injuries Hopkins' rough tactics spawn. One had to feel badly for Wright because he's made his career outsmarting guys, outboxing them, outthinking them, and outslicking them. To find out there's always been a much better version of you out there, and he just kicked your butt, has to be the saddest revelation of all.

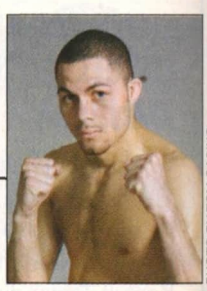


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Kermit Cintron

IN OTHER NEWS

In Cologne, Germany, **Wladimir Klitschko** stopped **Lamon Brewster** in six rounds to retain the IBF heavyweight title ... **Vernon Forrest** won the vacant WBC junior middleweight title with a decision over **Carlos Baldomir** in Tacoma, Washington ... Former welterweight contender **Tommy Ayers** was arrested and charged with trafficking in cocaine ... **Jorge Linares** stopped **Oscar Larios** in 10 rounds in Las Vegas to win the vacant WBC featherweight title ... IBF welterweight beltholder **Kermit Cintron** stopped challenger **Walter Matthysse** in two rounds in Atlantic City, New Jersey ... Former middleweight contender **Pete Mead**, 83, died in Jonesboro, Michigan. He was 83 years old ... In Durango, Mexico, **Cristian Mijares** retained the

WBC super flyweight title by stopping **Teppei Kikui** in the 10th round ... In an important welterweight fight in Atlantic City, **Paul Williams** decisioned **Antonio Margarito** over 12 rounds ... **Steve Molitor** stopped **Takalani Ndloyu Orilla** in nine rounds in Rama, Ontario in defense of the IBF super bantamweight title ... **Joachim Alcine** upset **Travis Simms** in Bridgeport, Connecticut, to win the WBA super welterweight title ... **Laila Ali** married retired NFL receiver **Curtis Conway** in Los Angeles ... **Edgar Sosa** retained the WBC flyweight belt in Cancun, Mexico, when challenger **Luis Lazarte** was disqualified in the 10th round ... Former British heavyweight champion **James Oyebola**, 46, was shot to death outside a London nightclub ... **Luis Alberto Perez** stopped **Genaro Garcia** in seven rounds in Bridgeport, Connecticut, to win the vacant IBF bantamweight title ... **Danny Carbajal**, the brother and former trainer of Hall of Famer **Michael Carbajal**, pleaded guilty to fraud and theft charges in Maricopa County (Arizona) Superior Court ... **Daisuke Naito** outpointed **Pongsaklek Wonjongkam** in Tokyo to claim the WBC flyweight title ... Super middleweight **Antwun Echols** was shot in the leg while trying to break up a fight in Davenport, Iowa, and subsequently was charged with possession of crack cocaine and outstanding warrants for child support ... In Tokyo, **Takefumi Sakata** retained the WBA flyweight title by outpointing **Roberto Vasquez** ... *The New York Times* published an article that exposed the use of falsified medical records by boxers fighting in several states, including Nevada, California, and New Mexico ... **Florante Condes** defended the IBF minimumweight title with a decision win over **Muhammad Rachman** in Jakarta, Indonesia ... In Cardiff, Wales, **Gavin Rees** won the WBA super lightweight title with a decision over **Souleymane M'baye**.

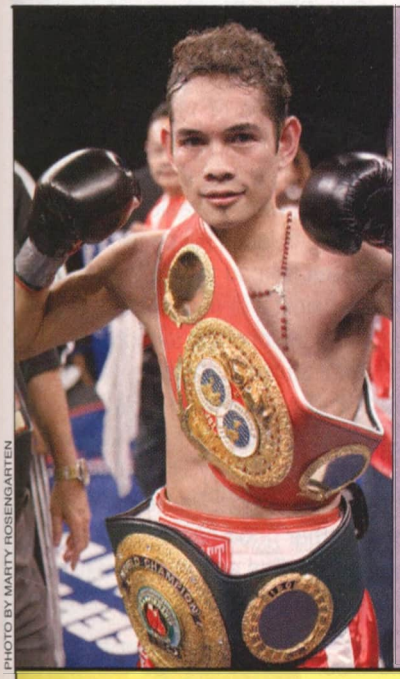


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
NONITO DONAIRE

Nonito Donaire's one-punch, fifth-round knockout of feared banger Vic Darchinyan didn't just surprise Darchinyan. It surprised most of us who had watched Darchinyan climb all over *Glenn* Donaire the prior October. Why we would assume Darchinyan would beat one brother just because he'd beaten the other is rather a puzzle, but Nonito's crashing left hook made it all a moot point.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I love the UFC. I love it. If they had had that back when I was coming up, in 1966, that would have been my sport. And you know what? Nobody would have pulled the rope-a-dope on me."

—Two-time former heavyweight champion George Foreman, telling yahoo.com how he feels about mixed martial arts

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Winner: New Jersey boxing commissioner Larry Hazzard, whose entrance into the ring assured the stoppage, long overdue, of the Alfonso Gomez-Arturo Gatti fight in Atlantic City, won by Gomez in the seventh round.

Loser: The Nevada State Athletic Commission, whose members fined Hopkins $200,000 for shoving Wright during the prefight weigh-in. The amount represented 6.6 percent of Hopkins' $3-million purse.

FIGHT OF THE MONTH
MICHAEL KATSIDIS W 12 CZAR AMONSOT

Anytime a wide-open slugger like Katsidis steps into the ring, you're guaranteed action. When he goes against a stubborn sharpshooter like Amonsot, count yourself doubly lucky. Amonsot dominated this one early, busting open Katsidis' left eye and reddening everything else. But Katsidis kept firing heavy bombs and eventually wore down Amonsot to take a hard-earned decision in an all-action fight.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

August

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

STORY OF THE MONTH

NOT WITH A WHIMPER, BUT WITH A BANG

The careers of so many iconic fighters end in the most undignified manner—with a humiliating beatdown at the hands of a fighter they'd have easily whipped in better, long-ago days. As Erik Morales approached the end of his career, he looked certain to suffer the same fate, especially in view of the way he was summarily blown out by Manny Pacquiao in their rubber match. That insult, when coupled with the knockout Pacquiao dealt him in their rematch, seemed to point Morales decidedly in the unfriendly direction of the final-fight humiliation that is so often the period at the end of even the greatest fighters' best soliloquies.

Morales is nothing if not shrewd, however, and his agreement to face David Diaz for an alphabet belt at lightweight was evidence of this. Diaz, of course, was the least formidable of the three recognized beltholders and world champion Joel Casamayor. So if you noted with some irony that Morales chose him rather than Juan Diaz or Julio Diaz, it shows you are paying attention and have been at this for a while. Diaz was also the more convenient choice because he and Morales shared the same promoter in Top Rank. But Morales' name was big enough so that if he wanted one of the other Diaz lightweights, he would have gotten him.

Still, David Diaz was risky enough for what Morales said beforehand would be his final fight. Indeed, Diaz' win, by scores of 114-113, 115-113, and 115-112, bore out the severity of that risk, as did Morales' final-round demeanor, which revealed he had not a drop of gas left in his once-bottomless tank. But he had fought an honorable fight against a stronger, fresher fighter. He even scored a knockdown in the opening round when Diaz, full of youthful enthusiasm after stunning Morales, walked into a perfect right cross. Diaz' only real advantage was that he had not gone through the meat grinder of three fights each with Marco Antonio Barrera and Manny Pacquiao, not to mention wars against Wayne McCullough, Paulie Ayala, Daniel Zaragoza, and about every other good fighter between 122 and 130 pounds. That advantage was enough to get him by.

You can be certain that Morales, an especially proud fighter, was not pleased at having lost, by a close margin or otherwise. But it must have served as some comfort to know that he went out not as many champions do, but as many can only wish they had.

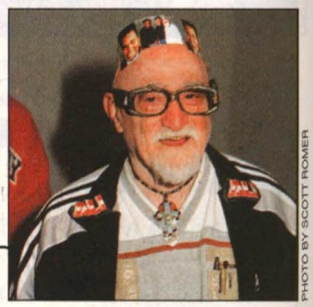


PHOTO BY SCOTT ROMER

Chuck Bodak

IN OTHER NEWS

In Berlin, Germany, **Arthur Abraham** defended the IBF middleweight title by stopping **Khoren Gevor** in the 11th round ... Chicago super middleweight **Donovan George** was charged with sexual assault for offenses that were alleged to have taken place between 1996 and 1998 ... In Rosemont, Illinois, IBF light flyweight beltholder **Ulises Solis** retained the title with an eighth-round stoppage of challenger **Rodel Mayol** ... Former WBA flyweight titleholder **Eric Morel** was released from the Fox Lake (Wisconsin) Correctional Institution, where he served 20 months for second-degree sexual assault

of a 15-year-old girl ... Pioneering South African boxing broadcaster **Steve de Villiers**, 84, died in Johannesburg ... In Hidalgo, Texas, **Celestino Caballero** retained the WBA super bantamweight title with a decision over **Jorge Lacierva** ... Cuban amateur stars **Guillermo Rigondeaux** and **Erislandy Lara** were arrested for overstaying their visas in Rio de Janeiro during what was reported to be an attempt to defect and emigrate to Germany, where they would box professionally ... In an important junior featherweight bout in Sacramento, California, **Daniel Ponce De Leon** stopped highly regarded Filipino prospect **Rey Bautista** in the first round ... WBA featherweight beltholder **Chris John** stopped challenger **Zaiki Takemoto** in nine rounds in Kobe, Japan ... Sports and Entertainment Publications, a subsidiary of **Golden Boy Enterprises**, acquired THE RING magazine and related titles from Kappa Publishing Group ... WBA super middleweight beltholder **Tony Mundine** suffered a career-threatening eye injury in New Zealand ... Former junior welterweight world champion **Carlos Hernandez** was hit by a car and seriously injured in Caracas, Venezuela ... Former world bantamweight champion **Lionel Rose** suffered a stroke in Australia ... **Mzonke Fana** stopped **Javier Osvaldo Alvarez** in Klerksdorp, South Africa, in defense of the IBF super featherweight title ... Junior welterweight **Troy Harden**, 22, was found shot to death in a Melbourne, Florida, apartment building ... Legendary Southern California cutman **Chuck Bodak** suffered a stroke ... Longtime manager and promoter **Jack Leonard**, 89, died in a nursing home in Florida.

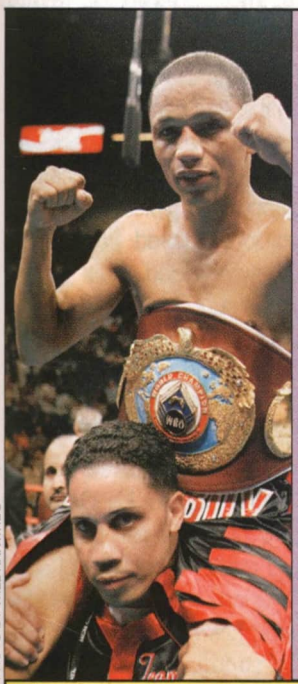


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
Ivan Calderon

No one has doubted Calderon's ability all these years, but he'd never demonstrated it against a world-class fighter. That changed when he stepped up to 108 pounds and beat junior flyweight world champion Hugo Cazares in a bout that required Calderon to dig deep to survive Cazares' late-round surge. We always knew Calderon could box. This showed us he could fight, too.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I definitely wouldn't be thinking about trying to do that. They worked me harder than boxing. Dancing is a good workout, but it's stressful on your mind to learn different dances."

*—Former **Dancing With The Stars** contestant Evander Holyfield, commenting on Floyd Mayweather's decision to compete on the popular TV show while training for his fight with Ricky Hatton*

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Winner: Former WBC flyweight beltholder Gerry Penalosa, who overcame a huge points deficit to stop Jhonny Gonzalez with a bodyblow in the seventh round of their bout in Sacramento, California.

Loser: The producers at cable giant Showtime, who found it necessary to edit out the swearing that Ricardo Mayorga and Fernando Vargas did at one another during a split-screen interview, conducted by Jim Gray. Isn't swearing one of the things you're supposed to be able to hear on premium cable channels?

FIGHT OF THE MONTH
ISRAEL VAZQUEZ KO 6 RAFAEL MARQUEZ

It was hard to decide going into this if it could possibly be as good as their thrilling first encounter. On one hand, it was unlikely: How many rematches are as good as their predecessors? At the same time, how could these two possibly make a bad fight? The latter conclusion was the right one, as these two battered one another again with uncommon intensity and world-class skills, with Vazquez regaining the world junior featherweight title. Rubber match, anyone?

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

September

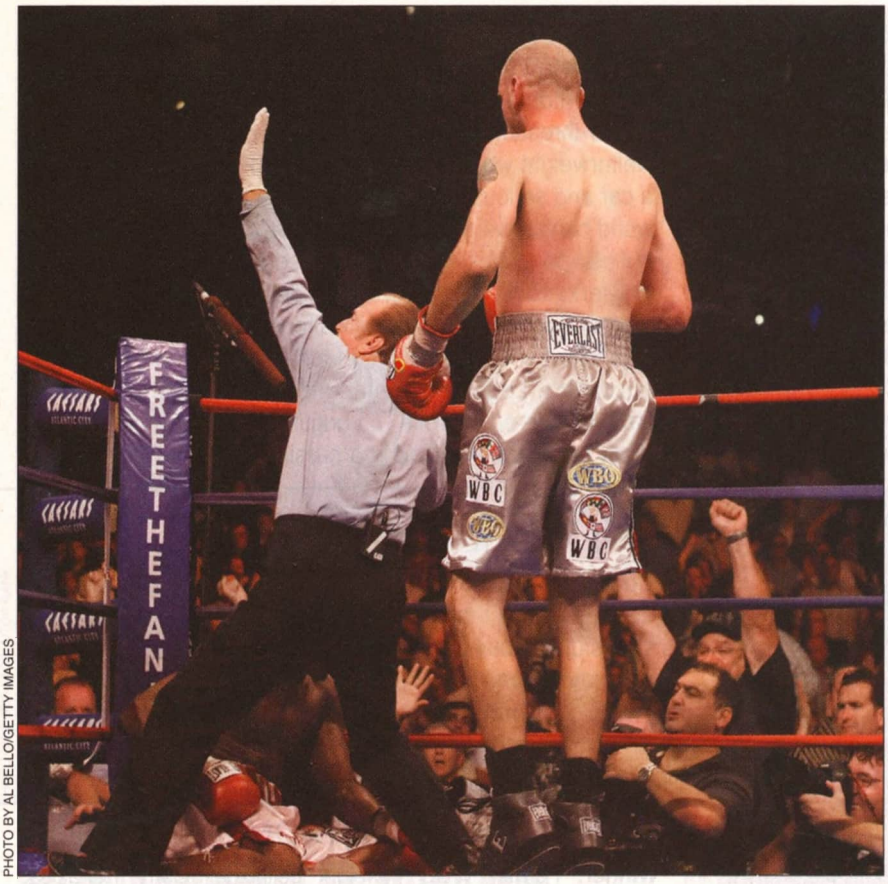


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

STORY OF THE MONTH

NEW LEADER OF THE PACK

It's hard to say with precision or certainty whether the great wave of relief that came over much of the boxing business when Kelly Pavlik stopped Jermain Taylor was due to Pavlik's story, which includes how the fight was won, or Taylor's own immense unpopularity. It might be that it was both. Either way, the passing of the middleweight world title from Taylor's hands to Pavlik's reverberated throughout the business. And not the way that a Mike Tyson tabloid headline used to. In a good way.

Certainly Taylor's perceived vulnerability had something to do with it. The way a nation loves a strong, wise leader and detests a weak and dim one, so must boxing fans abhor a champion, especially in the storied middleweight division, who just squeaks by, fight after fight. Taylor's troubled struggles with Bernard Hopkins, Winky Wright, and even Kassim Ouma and Cory Spinks, for crying out loud, sent the signal to fight fans that he no longer was worthy, if he ever was, of being their leader. The Spinks fight especially, having taken place mere minutes after Pavlik crushed Edison Miranda in a rousing brawl, was most damaging. Taylor never looked more inept, and never less like a champion. To extend the metaphor, Pavlik, in smashing the feared and favored Miranda, looked downright presidential.

It was as though in nature, when the alpha male in the wolf pack becomes sick or is injured and the rest of the pack—his own pack—is uneasy until his replacement is found and appointed, typically by violent, bloody expulsion. Indeed, as HBO's countdown show revealed, even Taylor's own hometown supporters had all but turned on him by the time the showdown with Pavlik came due.

That's not all there was to it, though. Certainly, the reaction to Taylor getting deposed would not have been the same if achieved by, say, Wright, or Felix Sturm, or Randy Griffin. Maybe Joe Calzaghe would have elicited the same kind of response, but not in America. Pavlik is such a stoic and matter-of-fact force, such an everyman from blue-collar America, that he is instantly identifiable as the kid next door who grew up to make good. Moreover, he carries the air of a strong, quiet alpha male going about his business full in the knowledge that he's just doing his job, a Dirty Harry in short pants and gloves. So long as he's allowed to do it, the women, children—and fight fans—will be safe and content. Happy days are here again.

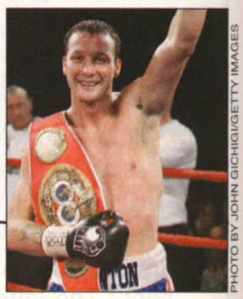


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Clinton Woods

IN OTHER NEWS

Chad Dawson stopped **Epifiano Mendoza** in four rounds to retain the WBC light heavyweight title in Sacramento, California ... In Brandford, England, **Junior Witter** stopped Vivian Harris in seven rounds in defense of the WBC super lightweight belt ... Female boxer **Cindy "Checkmate" Serrano** was charged with selling steroids following a police raid on a Queens, New York, gym ... **Edgar Sosa** stopped **Lorenzo Trejo** in nine rounds in Las Vegas in defense

of the WBC light flyweight title ... In Tokyo, Japan, WBA minimumweight titleholder **Yutaka Niida** decisioned challenger **Eriberto Gejon** ... Lightweight contender **Nate Campbell** was arrested by Hillborough County (Florida) sheriff's officers and charged with armed burglary, assault, false imprisonment, tampering with a witness, and misdemeanor battery ... Former super middleweight contender **Scott Pemberton** was arrested and charged with conspiracy to distribute drugs in New Bedford, Massachusetts ... Retired junior flyweight **Rustico Torrecampo** was sought by police in the Philippines after being accused of stabbing a truck driver to death ... In Tokyo, **Alexander Munoz** won a decision over **Kuniyuki Aizawa** to retain the WBA super flyweight title ... A Warwick, Rhode Island, District Court judge dropped charges of domestic assault and disorderly conduct against two-division former titleholder **Vinny Paz** when his accuser, **Ashley Spencer**, failed to show up in court ... **Clinton Woods** retained the IBF light heavyweight title with a decision win over **Julio Gonzalez** in Sheffield, England ... Two people were arrested in connection with the shooting death of former British heavyweight champion **James Oyebola** ... **Joseph Agbeko** won the IBF bantamweight title when he stopped **Luis Perez** in Sacramento, California ... Junior welterweight **Jackson Bussell**, 28, died of head injuries suffered in a six-round draw with **Javier Garcia** the previous day in Los Angeles.

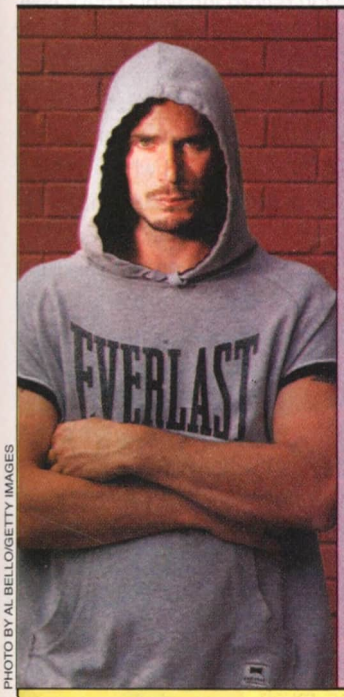


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
Kelly Pavlik

Pavlik didn't have anywhere near Jermain Taylor's credentials. All those rounds Taylor put in with Hopkins and Wright were the equivalent of a master's degree in boxing—or they should have been. What did Pavlik have? Knockout wins over Bronco McKart and Edison Miranda. Not much of a comparison. But he had the gumption, the punch, and, most importantly, the self-belief he needed to overcome Taylor's greater experience.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I think I just gave the maid a really big tip."

—Mike Pavlik, father of new world middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik, on realizing he had left his son's $665,750 paycheck in an Atlantic City hotel room

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Winner: Welterweight prospect Andre Berto, who passed the most significant test of his career when he stopped veteran David Estrada in the 11th round on the Pavlik-Taylor undercard. The only other fighter to stop Estrada was Kermit Cintron, who did it in 10 rounds in April 2006.

Loser: Promoter Cedric Kushner, who issued a press release stating he would use a lawsuit he had pending against Shelley Finkel to get David Tua a fight with Wladimir Klitschko. This just after Tua stopped 37-year-old journeyman and one-time *light heavyweight* contender Saul Montana in the first round.

FIGHT OF THE MONTH
Kelly Pavlik KO 7 Jermain Taylor

Pavlik's knockout of Taylor wasn't just a meaningful fight, it also happened to be an exciting and dramatic one. There couldn't have been more than a couple of people in the crowd who thought Pavlik had any chance of getting out of the second round after Taylor dropped him. He did, of course, walked through some more bombs later on, and planted Taylor with about the most flush right hand we saw landed all year.

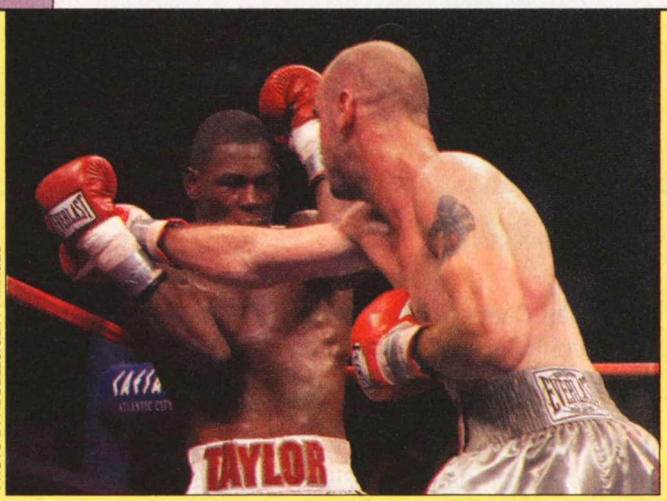


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

October

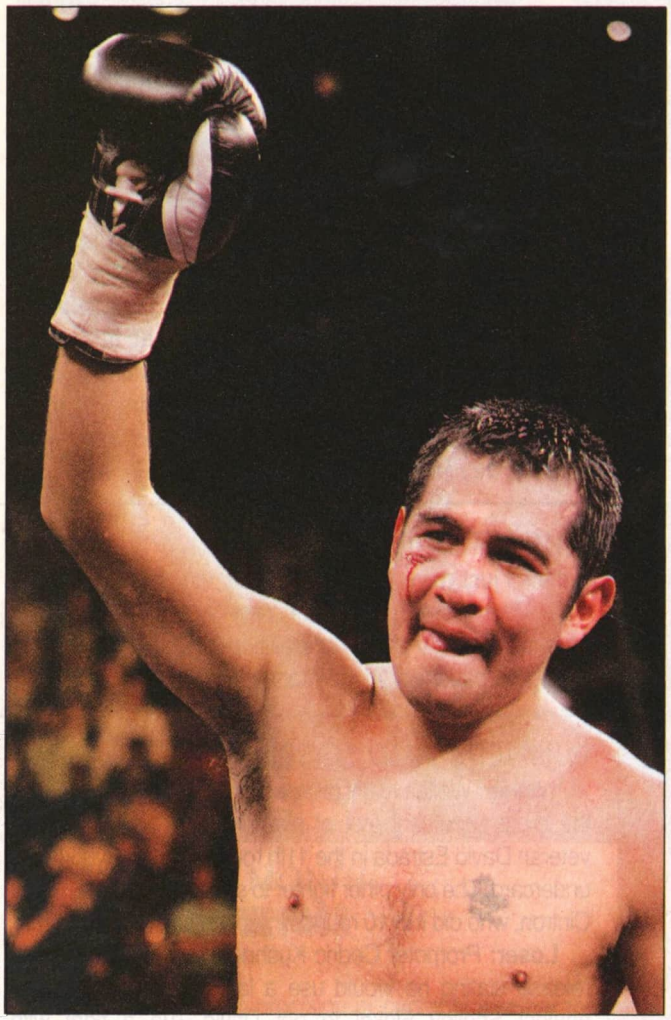


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

STORY OF THE MONTH

ANOTHER MEXICAN ICON SAYS GOODBYE

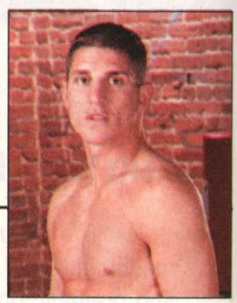
Just as Muhammad Ali's final fight and retirement announcement came shortly after Joe Frazier's—eight eight days to be exact—so did Marco Antonio Barrera's follow Erik Morales', when Barrera lost a decision to Manny Pacquiao in Las Vegas. It's true the time between announcements was longer, as Barrera lost to Pacquiao just under two months after David Diaz decisioned Morales and Morales retired (it would be disrespectful, not to mention inaccurate, to say that *Diaz* retired Morales; Morales retired himself).

Pacquiao and Diaz are worlds better than the fighters who nudged Ali and Frazier, finally, toward lives outside the ring—Trevor Berbick and Jumbo Cummings, respectively. That Barrera and Morales fought at such a high level right up until the end, as compared to Ali and Frazier, means either they retired too soon or that Ali and Frazier waited too long. We all know the answer.

Either way, like his compatriot and rival Morales, Barrera made it clear to all that his rematch with Pacquiao would be his last fight, win or lose. Whether he'd have remained true to that conviction in the event of a victory is debatable now, but wasn't even a serious topic for discussion before the fight. That's how unlikely a win for Barrera seemed, especially in light of the result of his previous fight, a decision loss to a feistier-than-usual Juan Manuel Marquez. And Marquez, even at his most assertive, is no Manny Pacquiao. That and the one-sided nature of the first Pacquiao-Barrera fight, contested back in 2003 when Barrera still had some fire left, obliterated any consideration that we'd ever see him in a ring again.

Still, Barrera kept it reasonably competitive, even if you wouldn't know it from the unrealistically wide scores of 118-109 tallied by judges Jerry Roth and Glenn Trowbridge. Tom Schreck's more reasonable 115-112 could be seen as a moral victory for Barrera, and yet it could be debated whether the lack of a complete whitewashing wasn't due more than anything to Pacquiao's odd decision to back off and box more than usual. After all, it was his pretty fair impression of Henry Armstrong in their first fight that had so overwhelmed a younger, fresher Barrera.

Perhaps it was a concern about Karma that restrained Pacquiao. Whether or not he likes it, he, too, will someday be in the position that Morales and Barrera were in, almost and fittingly simultaneously. He can only hope that he goes out with as much class as they did, and, in Barrera's case in particular, with as much peace of mind. That's a hard thing for any man to find, but especially for fighters.



Joey Gilbert

IN OTHER NEWS

Juan Carlos Reveco stopped **Humberto Pool** in the fifth round in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to retain the WBA junior flyweight title ... In Moscow, Russia, **Dimitri Kirilov** won the vacant IBF junior bantamweight title with a decision over **Jose Navarro** ... Reno, Nevada, middleweight and Season One *Contender* star **Joey Gilbert** was suspended by the Nevada State Athletic Commission for failing a postfight drug test ... World welterweight champion **Floyd Mayweather** was voted off the reality television series *Dancing With The Stars* ... In Montreal, Quebec, **Luciene Bute** stopped **Alejandro Berrioto** in the 11th round in defense of the IBF super middleweight title ... Australian boxing legend **Jeff Fenech** pleaded guilty to stealing two watches from a

boutique and was fined $750 ... **Felix Sturm** retained the WBA middleweight title with a draw against **Randy Griffin** in Halle, Germany ... The New York *Daily News* reported that in 2005 and 2006 heavyweight contender **Jameel McCline** received more than $12,000 worth of performance-enhancing drugs. McCline also made the news when he knocked down **Sam Peter** three times during an important heavyweight bout in New York, only to lose a 12-round decision ... Referee **Alan Lovell** was shot to death in the Bartlett, Tennessee, home he shared with his wife, Dorothy, who was charged with voluntary manslaughter in the incident. Lovell was 46 years old ... In Cancun, Mexico, WBC junior bantamweight titleholder **Cristian Mijares** stopped challenger **Franck Gorjux** in the first round ... The Japan Boxing Commission suspended **Daiki Kameda** for a year and his farther/cornerman, **Shiro Kameda**, indefinitely after Kameda repeatedly fouled WBC flyweight titleholder **Daisuke Naito** at his father's direction during their bout in Tokyo, which Naito won by decision ... British lightweight **Amir Khan** was convicted of careless driving, fined £1,000, and banned from driving for six months ... The comeback of former heavyweight champion **Evander Holyfield** hit a snag when he was decisioned in Moscow by **Sultan Ibragimov**... IBF super bantamweight beltholder **Steve Molitor** retained the title with a decision win against **Fashan 3K Battery** in Rama, Ontario ... Former IBF junior middleweight titleholder **Kassim Ouma** was released from Palm Beach County (Florida) Jail after posting $500 bond. He had been arrested for careless driving, driving with a suspended license, and failure to appear in court.

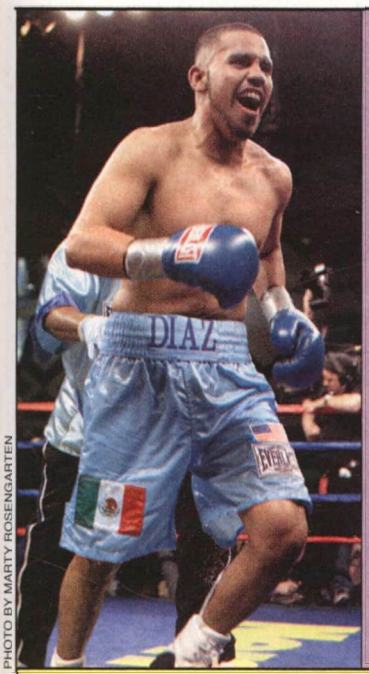


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
Juan Diaz

It's one thing when Diaz' suffocating pressure and work rate make Acelino Freitas quit on his stool. It's another thing entirely when he does it to Julio Diaz, as he did when the two met in Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Julio had no answer to Juan's attack and remained on his stool after the ninth round, having been battered and outgunned for the length of the fight. It was the strongest case Diaz had made yet to be called an uncrowned champion.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I don't know. Every day there is a war with myself."

—Former junior welterweight champion Kostya Tszyu, commenting on whether he'll fight again

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Winner: Super middleweight Librado Andrade, who stole the show on the Pacquiao-Barrera II pay-per-view card when he rose from a first-round knockdown to outslug and outlast Yusef Mack on the way to a seventh-round kayo win.

Losers: The executive body of the WBO, which denied Kendall Holt's request for an immediate rematch with Ricardo Torres despite credible reports that numerous irregularities occurred during their "title" bout in Colombia in September, which was won by Torres.

FIGHT OF THE MONTH
Fernando Montiel KO 12 Luis Melendez

Montiel hurt in the third, Melendez down in the sixth, Montiel down in the seventh, both guys wobbly down the stretch. What more could you ask for than that?

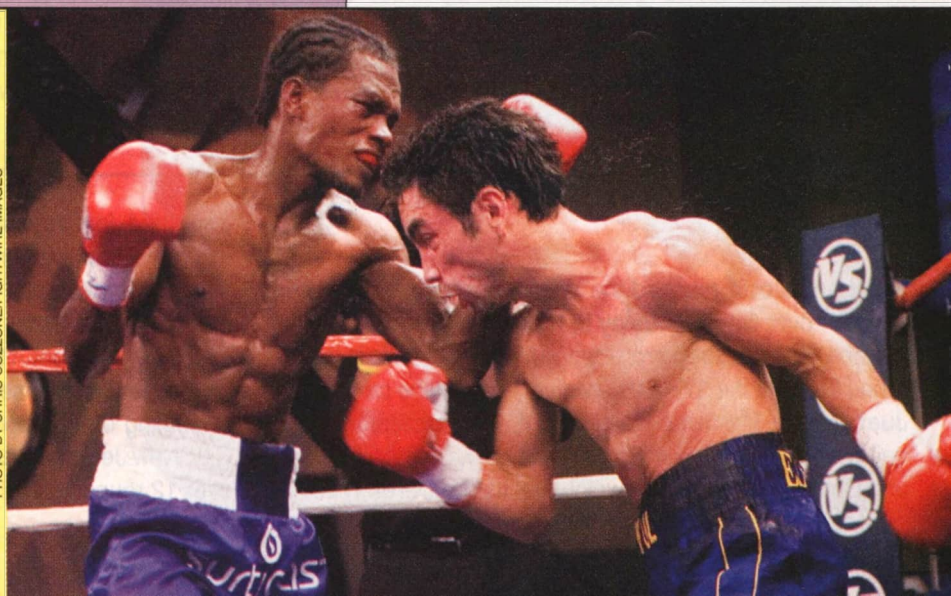


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

November

PHOTO BY JENS SCHLUETER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

STORY OF THE MONTH

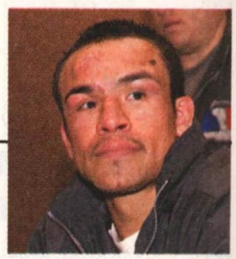
50,150 BUTTS IN SEATS CAN'T BE WRONG

It was one or two of the best things that could possibly have happened for Joe Calzaghe fans, and about the same going the other way for Calzaghe's doubters, most (but not all) of whom could be found in America. Calzaghe's scintillating win over Dane Mikkel Kessler, in front of better than 50,000 spectators in Millennium Stadium in Cardiff was a do-or-die fight for the Welshman. That may sound like quite a heap of nonsense for a fighter who hadn't lost in 43 fights and was the super middleweight world champion already as a result of his spectacular win over Jeff Lacy in March 2006.

But to Calzaghe's admittedly shrinking legions of critics, Lacy wasn't the fighter his musculature and favorable matchmaking made him out to be. Moreover, Calzaghe's history of pulling out of fights and of clinging to friendly European shores while all the while verbalizing a desperate desire to fight the best American fighters, in America, suggested a duplicity that could be hiding just one thing: mediocrity. And American fight fans, based on 70 years of history, have never needed much cajoling to buy the notion that, until he proved otherwise, an undefeated European fighter was, well, probably less than his record implied (see Sven Ottke).

Calzaghe's win over Kessler changed that, mostly because Kessler, though not terribly more experienced against American fighters than was Calzaghe, had at least fought and beaten guys many thought Calzaghe should have. Namely Markus Beyer, Eric Lucas, and Tony Mundine, to name a few, Manny Siaca to name another. Also, Kessler's blazing, two-fisted grace seemed superior, and not just aesthetically, to Calzaghe's southpaw and quick-fisted but awkwardly delivered offense. So the thinking of many going into the fight was, "If Calzaghe wins this, *then* I'll be a believer."

There could be no fair-minded disbelievers afterward. Kessler was Calzaghe's top-ranked challenger (and undefeated himself, it should be noted), and by the bout's midway point Calzaghe had already taken away his heart for the whole affair. Kessler had his successes early, crashed home a few uppercuts, and made Calzaghe work a bit. But as soon as Calzaghe stepped forward in earnest and walked through Kessler's best right hands, some of the fight went out of the Dane, and Calzaghe took over. The judges' scores of 117-111 and 116-112 (twice) were reasonable but probably not a fair reflection of the true distance between the fighters in terms of maturity and resolve. Kessler may yet someday turn out to be a noteworthy champion. Calzaghe already is.



Juan Manuel Marquez

In Other News

Miguel Cotto retained the WBA welterweight title with a decision over **Shane Mosley** in New York City ... In Tucson, Arizona, **Robert Guerrero** stopped **Martin Honorio** in the first round to retain the IBF featherweight title. On the same show, **Juan Manuel Marquez** retained the WBC super featherweight belt with a decision over **Rocky Juarez** ... Former European and Commonwealth heavyweight titleholder **Derek Williams** was tried in Croydon Crown Court in connection with charges that he sexually assaulted a 15-year-old girl in Thornton Heath, South London ... WBA flyweight titleholder **Takefuni Sakata** drew with challenger **Denkaosen Singwacha** in Saitama, Japan ... In a meeting of top super featherweight contenders in Atlantic City, New Jersey, **Joan Guzman** decisioned **Humberto Soto** over 12 rounds ... Milana Dravnel, a 22-year-old model who

claimed to have taken compromising photos of **Oscar De La Hoya** during an affair, filed a $100-million lawsuit against De La Hoya, claiming fraud, defamation, and infliction of emotional distress ... The Hillsborough County (Florida) State Attorney's Office dropped charges of armed burglary, false imprisonment, witness tampering, and domestic battery against lightweight **Nate Campbell** ... While repairing a window at his home in Youngstown, Ohio, world middleweight champion **Kelly Pavlik** suffered cut hands when the glass shattered ... Former heavyweight champion **Mike Tyson** was sentenced to and completed one day in an Arizona jail on DUI and cocaine possession charges related to an arrest in September ... In New York, world junior lightweight champion **Joel Casamayor** won a highly controversial decision over challenger **Jose Armando Santa Cruz** ... In Los Angeles, California, former WBA/WBC welterweight and WBC junior middleweight beltholder **Ricardo Mayorga** won a majority decision over former IBF junior middleweight titlist **Fernando Vargas**. On the same show, it took IBF welterweight titlist **Kermit Cintron** 10 rounds to dispose of hard-headed challenger **Jesse Feliciano** ... In Veracruz, Mexico, **Edgar** Sosa successfully defended the WBC junior flyweight title with a fourth-round knockout of **Roberto Carlos Levya** ... **Firat Arslan** won the vacant WBA cruiserweight title by outpointing 43-year-old former WBA/IBF light heavyweight and WBA cruiserweight beltholder **Virgil Hill** in Dresden, Sachsen, Germany ... Literary icon and sometime boxing writer **Norman Mailer** died in New York at age 84.

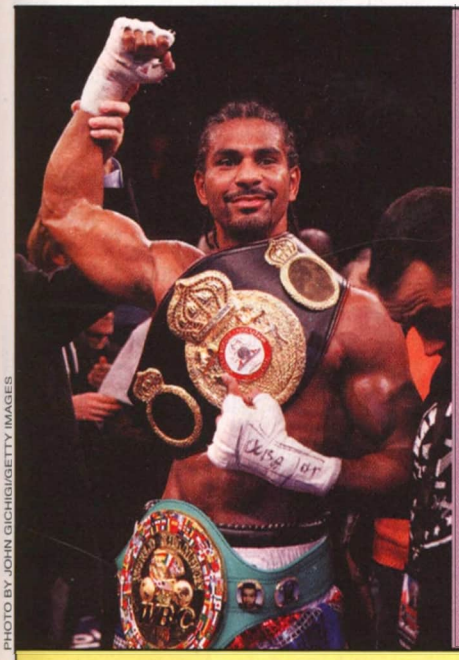


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

David Haye

Haye likes to leave his chin hanging in the air and isn't exactly a stickler when it comes to technique. But as Jean-Marc Mormeck found out when he met Haye in Levallois Perret, France, "Hayemaker" can crack and isn't afraid to let his hands go. Haye's off-the-floor seventh-round knockout netted him the world cruiserweight title and a legion of new fans.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I don't really like boxing. But if you need an answer: Evander Holyfield—he is a warrior."

—WBA welterweight beltholder Miguel Cotto when asked by Sandra Guzman of ***The New York Post*** *to name his favorite boxer*

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Winner: Wladimir Klitschko and Sultan Ibragimov, who, by signing to meet one another, showed the rest of the world's reluctant heavyweights what it looks like when two guys aren't afraid to step up and take risks.

Loser: Everyone involved in the firing of Larry Hazzard, who served honorably as commissioner of the New Jersey State Athletic Control Board for 22 years.

FIGHT OF THE MONTH

Sakio Bika KO 8 Jaidon Codrington

The producers of *The Contender* reality boxing series on ESPN could not have asked for a better finale than this slam-bang, action-packed slugfest featuring the young gunslinger in Codrington against the hardened contender in Bika. The two traded first-round knockdowns and then proceeded to hammer one another silly until Bika's greater strength and experience won out in the eighth.

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

December

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

STORY OF THE MONTH

WALKING IN A MAYWEATHER WONDERLAND

The stubborn passion of Ricky Hatton's British constituency notwithstanding, most rational observers handicapped the welterweight championship fight between he and Floyd Mayweather as rather a one-sided affair. And when Mayweather knocked Hatton loopy with a left hook and then finished him at 1:35 of the 10th round, that clear-mindedness was rewarded.

It wasn't ever that Hatton couldn't fight, not with what he had done to Jose Luis Castillo, of all people. It wasn't that he'd never fought anyone, or that he'd fought only has-beens, or any of the other stuff American fight fans typically use to discount the worth of European fighters. It was because of two things, not necessarily in this order: As the junior welterweight world champion, he was out of his best weight class at 147; and he was meeting the best boxer, pound-for-pound, on the planet.

That the fight drew a raucous, sold-out crowd of 16,429 to the MGM Grand in Las Vegas and an estimated 850,000 pay-per-view buys despite those two factors speaks to the power of British fight fandom and to smart promotion. The latter of these two was manifest in HBO's production of *Mayweather/Hatton 24/7*, which was modeled after *Mayweather/De La Hoya 24/7*, which ran to glowing critical reviews and was credited with contributing to a pay-per-view windfall. (The HBO documentary couldn't properly be credited with contributing to the live gate of Mayweather-Hatton, as tickets to the event were sold out 30 minutes after going on sale.)

Mayweather/Hatton 24/7, in addition to permitting a glimpse into the personal lives of the subjects, wove a narrative that suggested that Hatton, a significant underdog, maintained a reasonable chance of victory. Ostensibly, that is the pervasive belief in any training camp, so by fixing the camera repeatedly on Hatton's gap-toothed and cocksure trainer, Billy Graham, the producers helped shape the event in the viewer's mind as something of a tossup. You couldn't blame them for it; this is showbiz, after all.

It was Hatton's British fans that blew the fight into a huge event. By the thousands they flew into Las Vegas, chanting and singing the "Walking In A Hatton Wonderland" song that could be heard from the moment they landed and then even throughout Hatton's postfight interview with HBO's Larry Merchant. It's a rare thing in all of sport, never mind boxing, for an athlete to be so beloved. But as Mayweather demonstrated, this thing isn't about love. And at some point the showbiz ends and all you have left is a fight.

Holman Williams

IN OTHER NEWS

Former welterweight champion **Vernon Forrest** won the vacant WBC junior middleweight title with an 11th-round knockout of **Michele Piccirillo** in Mashantucket, Connecticut. On the same show, former light heavyweight champion **Antonio Tarver** stopped **Danny Santiago** in four rounds … World super middleweight champion **Joe Calzaghe** was named the BBC Sports Personality of the Year. His father, Enzo, was named Coach of the Year … **Joachim Alcine** defended the WBA junior middleweight title with a 12th-round stoppage of **Alfonso Mosquera** in Montreal, Quebec … On the Mayweather-Hatton card, highly rated junior featherweight **Daniel Ponce De Leon** decisioned **Eduardo Escobedo** over 12 rounds.

On the same show, former IBF super middleweight beltholder **Jeff Lacy**, in his first fight following major shoulder surgery, outpointed **Peter Manfredo** ... **Larry Holmes**, **Eddie Perkins**, and **Holman Williams** were among those elected to the International Boxing Hall of Fame ... In Basel, Switzerland, **Arthur Abraham** kayoed **Wayne Elcock** in five rounds to retain the IBF middleweight title ... In Belfast, Northern Ireland, middleweight prospect **John Duddy** decisioned two-time middleweight title challenger **Howard Eastman** over 10 rounds ... Longtime California referee and judge **Chuck Hassett**, 72, died in Anaheim ... In Cancun, Mexico, **Jorge Linares** retained the WBC featherweight title with an eighth-round kayo of **Gamaliel Diaz** ... In Le Cannet, France, **Brahim Asloum** outpointed **Juan Carlos Reveco** to claim the WBA light flyweight title ... In his first fight since suffering a career-threatening eye injury, "regular" WBA super middleweight beltholder **Tony Mundine** retained the title with a fourth-round knockout of **Jose Alberto Clavero** in Sydney, Australia ... Hall of Fame boxing historian **Hank Kaplan**, 88, died at his home in Kendall, Florida.

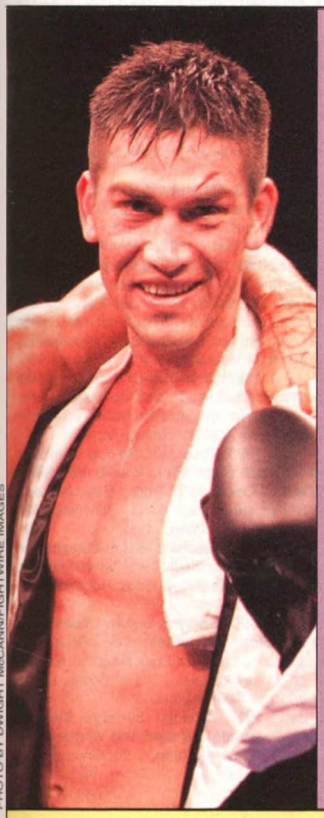


PHOTO BY DWIGHT MCCANN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
ENRIQUE ORNELAS

It's enough that Ornelas had to get off the canvas in both the first and second rounds to stop veteran Bronco McKart, who chose to remain on the stool after the fifth. But it's better than that—Ornelas' win avenged a split decision loss to McKart in August.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"The guy's a good fighter. But he do lead with his face. It's not his fault; he ain't got a jab. When you ain't got a jab, what do you have to do? You lead with your face, because you ain't allowed to kick."

—Trainer Roger Mayweather assessing Ricky Hatton prior to Hatton's challenge of world welterweight champion Floyd Mayweather

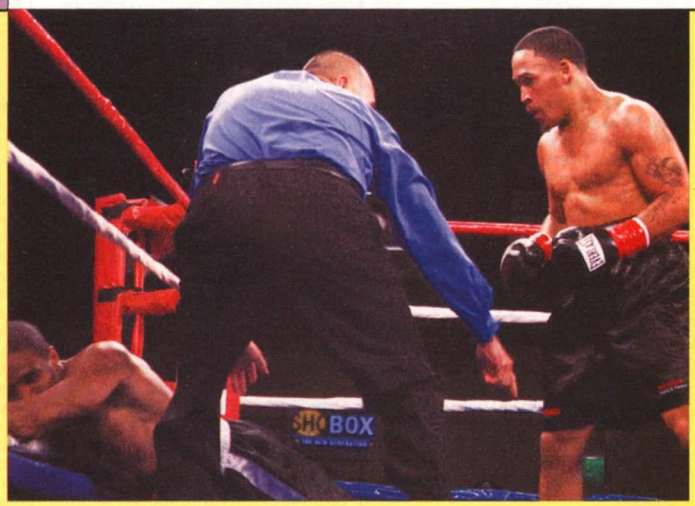
WINNERS AND LOSERS

Winner: WBA super featherweight beltholder Edwin Valero, who, despite being far too fragile to box, as deemed by regulators in the United States, crushed challenger Zaid Zavaleta in three rounds in Cancun, Mexico, to bring his record to 23-0 (23).

Loser: Former lightweight contender Edelmiro "Tiger" Martinez, who was indicted for insurance fraud in Queens, New York, after collecting workman's compensation payments for a ruptured biceps that he claimed occurred in 2004 while he was working at his job as a porter at the Lefrak City apartment complex. The state contended the injury occurred during a televised bout Martinez had against Nate Campbell three weeks before he claimed to have been injured on the job, and used tape of the fight—during which Martinez was disqualified for repeated low blows—as evidence.

FIGHT OF THE MONTH
JAMES KIRKLAND KO 1 ALLEN CONYERS

It lasted only 2:56, but there was enough action here for three 10-rounders. Kirkland immediately jumped on Conyers and drove him into the ropes. Conyers fired back, backed Kirkland off, and then dropped him with a straight right. With Conyers pressing for the kayo, Kirkland got off a combination that drove his opponent into the ropes again, and a followup left dropped him hard. Conyers, though barely upright, stormed back again. Finally, another two-punch combo dropped Conyers again and referee Ray Corona stopped it.



BACK ISSUES OF KO

Back issues of several editions of *KO Magazine* are still available inlimited quantity. Since its inception in 1980, *KO* was known for its quality stories and columns and peak-action photographs. Don't delay. Supplies are running out!

June 1983: WBA Jr. Middleweight Champion Davey Moore: Bracing For Duran's Last Stand. Color Pinup: Donald Curry. Interview: Pinklon Thomas. Also: Duran-Cuevas, Hagler-Sibson.

Aug. 1983: Michael Spinks: King Of The Light Heavyweights ... But The Glory Can't Erase The Sadness. Color Pinup: Johnny Bumphus. Interview: Jones & Rappaport. Also: Jones-McCrory, Pryor-Arguello II preview, world's best fighter poll, Jeff Chandler, Mark Breland, Leon Spinks.

Oct. 1983: Is Larry Holmes Finished? Color Pinup: Greg Page. Interview: Marvis Frazier. Also: Marvin Hagler, Bobby Chacon, Jack Dempsey.

July 1984: Donald Curry: "I'm Better Under Pressure." Color Pinup: Gerrie Coetzee. Interview: Curry. Also: Pipino Cuevas, John Mugabi, Bill Costello, M. Spinks-Davis.

Aug. 1984: WBC Heavyweight Champion Terrible Tim Witherspoon: A Superstar Of Tomorrow? Color Pinup: Rocky Lockridge. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Marvin Hagler, Gomez-LaPorte.

Oct. 1984: Golden Boy Mark Breland: Can He Be The Next Sugar Ray? Color Pinup: Jaime Garza. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Bramble-Mancini, Sugar Ray Leonard.

Nov. 1984: Thomas Hearns: "Hagler Is Shakin' Like A Leaf On A Tree!" Color Pinup: Tim Witherspoon. Interview: Livingstone Bramble. Also: Rosario-Davis, Marlon Starling.

Feb. 1985: Gerry Cooney: How Far Can He Go This Time? Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Ray Mancini. Also: Dream fights, Hector Camacho.

May 1985: Thomas Hearns: *KO* Fighter Of The Year. Color Pinup: Gerry Cooney. Also: Camacho-Ramirez, Truth Williams, Year In Review.

July 1985: Aaron Pryor: Has Hawk Time Run Out? Color Pinup: Donald Curry. Interview: Greg Page. Also: Ray Mancini, James Shuler, Costello-Hatcher.

Aug. 1985: King Cobra: "Hagler-Hearns Is Done And I'm Better Than Both Of Them!" Color Pinup: John Mugabi. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Larry Holmes, Roberto Duran, DeWitt-Lee.

Oct. 1985: Still Champ After All These Years: Larry Holmes—A Legend Continues To Grow. Interview: Mark Breland. Also: Michael Spinks, Milton McCrory, Wilfredo Gomez.

Nov. 1985: McGuigan! The Pluck Of The Irish. Also: Julio Cesar Chavez, Thomas-Weaver, Donald Curry, featherweights.

Dec. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "Larry Holmes Betrayed Boxing." Color Pinup: Hagler-Mugabi. Also: Mike McCallum, Tyrell Biggs, Camacho-Ramirez.

Jan. 1986: Macho Mania! Hector Camacho Takes Aim At 10 Tough Targets. Color Pinup: Jimmy Paul. Interview: Alexis Arguello. Also: Truth Williams, Curry-McCrory.

Feb. 1986: King Michael: How Long Will He Rule The Heavyweights? Also: Barry McGuigan, Shawn O'Sullivan, Spinks-Holmes, *Rocky IV*, world's best fighter poll.

Oct. 1986: They're Back!!! The Cooney Circus Returns. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Jimmy Paul, Mike Tyson, Donald Curry.

Dec. 1986: Larry Holmes' Message To Mike Tyson: "Show Me You Can Kick My Butt!" Color pinup: Mark Breland. Interview: Holmes. Also: Witherspoon-Bruno, Evander Holyfield, Cruz-McGuigan, Danny Lopez.

Feb. 1987: Upset Of The Decade: Has Honeyghan Cut Short The Curry Era? Color Pinup: Marvin Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Edwin Rosario, Hector Camacho.

June 1987: New WBA Welterweight Champion Mark Breland: He's Got A Lot To Smile About. Interview: Marvin Hagler. Color Pinup: Greg Haugen. Also: Michael Olajide, Carlos Monzon.

Nov. 1987: Michael Spinks: The War With Tyson Is Okay With Him. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Frankie Duarte. Also: Matthew Hilton, Hagler-Czyz.

Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King—But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

Jan. 1988: The Collapse Of A Hero: Why Breland Never Hit The Mark Of Greatness. Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Michael Nunn, Alexis Arguello, lightweights.

Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

July 1988: Superfight History Dictates: Don't Expect The Expected From Tyson-Spinks. Color Pinup: Roger Mayweather. Interview: Dr. Ferdie Pacheco. Also: Roberto Duran, Azumah Nelson, Barkley-Olajide.

Aug. 1988: Tyson-Spinks: *KO's* Fearless Forecast Of Superfight '88. Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Matthew Hilton. Also: Lockridge-Knight, Evander Holyfield, Lloyd Honeyghan.

Sept. 1988: Tyson-Spinks, The Aftermath—What If Tyson Wins; What If Spinks Wins? Color Pinup: Frank Tate. Interview: Marlon Starling. Also: Barry McGuigan, Simon Brown, risk-taking.

Oct. 1988: Middleweight Terrorism: Iran Bombs The Hit Man. Color Pinup: Don Lalonde. Interview: Frank Bruno. Also: Roger Mayweather, Marvin Hagler.

Dec. 1988: Sugar Ray's Comeback: Why? Color Pinup: Simon Brown. Interview: Kevin Rooney. Also: Michael Nunn, best fighter poll, welterweight wars.

Jan. 1989: The Troubled Times Of Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Lloyd Honeyghan. Interview: Gil Clancy. Also: Meldrick Taylor, Jeff Fenech, Boxing's Champs.

Sept. 1989: "I Beat Up Tyson Before, I'll Do It Again," by Carl Williams. Color Pinup: Michael Nunn. Also: Chavez-Mayweather, Brian Mitchell, Marv Albert.

Feb. 1990: George Foreman Risks A Multimillion-Dollar Shot At Tyson. Color Pinup: Brian Mitchell. Interview: Riddick Bowe. Also: Simon Brown, Molina-Lopez, East vs. West.

June 1990: A Sugar-Free Future? Thomas Hearns Is Looking Up. Color Pinup: Glenn McCrory. Interview: Michael Moorer. Also: Matthew Hilton, Molina-Suarez, Foreman-Cooney, Camacho-Paz.

July 1990: *KO* Interview—Sugar Ray Leonard. Color Pinup: Jorge Paez. Also: Michael Nunn, Buster Douglas, Jibaro Perez, the Olympians.

Aug. 1990: Meldrick Taylor: Brilliance In Defeat. Color Pinup: Buster Douglas. Interview: Teddy Atlas. Also: Buddy McGirt, Dokes-Ruddock, Simon Brown.

Sept. 1990: *KO* Interview—Buster Douglas. Color Pinup: Macho Camacho. Also: Thomas Hearns, Nigel Benn, Greg Haugen, Boxing Hall of Fame.

Oct. 1990: Send In The Clown: Is Jorge Paez A Phenom Or A Fraud? Color Pinup: Paul Banke. Interview: Tony Lopez. Also: Chavez-Taylor II, Jesse Benavides.

Nov. 1990: The Comeback Of Mike Tyson: A Crooked Course Straight To The Top. Color Pinup: Tony Lopez. Interview: Don Dunphy. Also: Davis-Breland, Riddick Bowe, federal commission.

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Aug. 1991: Desert Storm II: Will The Tyson-Ruddock Rematch Be Different? Color Pinup: Loreto Garza. Interview: Michael Carbajal. Also: Brown-Blocker, Fenech-Nelson preview, Harold Brazier, Yuh-Carbajal.

Sept. 1991: Remember Me? I Won The Fight! What "The Real Deal" Still Has To Deal With. Color Pinup: Ray Mercer. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Larry Holmes, southpaw heavyweights, Toney-Nunn, Brown-Taylor.

Oct. 1991: Thomas Hearns Works Another Miracle! Now There Are More Hills Left To Climb. Color Pinup: Humberto Gonzalez. Interview: Mike McCallum. Also: Norris-Curry, Richard Steele, Troy Dorsey.

Dec. 1991: Tyson vs. Holyfield—The Experts Analyze The Elements That Will Decide The Fight. Color Pinup: Joey Gamache. Also: Michael Moorer, Pernell Whitaker, Greg Richardson, Robert Quiroga.

Jan. 1992: The Tyson-Holyfield Showdown: An Exclusive Forecast By George Foreman. Color Pinup: Myung Woo Yuh. Also: Fenech-Nelson, TV announcers, boxing's toughest men, Toney-McCallum.

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June 1995: The Tug-Of-War Over Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Wilfredo Vasquez. Interview: Oliver McCall. Also: Alejandro Gonzalez, Alexis Arguello, Kostya Tszyu.

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weight loss.

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Sept. 2000: Now Vargas Is Ready For Trinidad & De La Hoya. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Trinidad vs. all-time greats, Thomas Hearns, common sense vs. cowardice.

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April 2002: After Hitting Rock Bottom ... Lennox Is Back On The Path To Greatness. Interview: Duva Boxing. Also: Zab Judah, Mike Tyson, Thomas Tate.

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REGINA HALMICH

BOXING BIDS FAREWELL TO ITS OWN BILLIE JEAN KING

By Brian Doogan

As the orchestra began to play, accompanying the beautiful, enchanting voice of Finland's supreme soprano, Tarja Turunen, singing *I Walk Alone*, large screens inside the DM Arena in Karlsruhe displayed images from the career of Regina Halmich. The effect was cinematic and inspiring and the TV audience watching the broadcast on Germany's public service network, ZDF, peaked at 10.2 million, a record for women's boxing and a remarkable 38.3 percent share of the national viewership.

Halmich, Europe's premier female fighter, a flyweight version of Laila Ali, had announced that she would be engaging in her final bout, and as she looked across the ring at her 23-year-old opponent from Israel, Hagar

Regina Halmich has proven that she's more than just a pretty face, becoming a national boxing star in Germany, in the same realm as Henry Maske, Darius Michalczewski, Sven Ottke, and the Klitschko brothers.

PHOTO BY OLIVER LANG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Halmich lands a left in her farewell fight against Israel's Hagar Shmoulefeld Finer, which drew 10.2 million television viewers. Halmich sent her fans home with a smile after securing a majority decision and her 54th victory in 56 pro fights.

Shmoulefeld Finer, she could feel the weight of a nation on her shoulders. The sport that she has done more than any other boxer to popularize in continental Europe required from her a fitting farewell win.

In 2001, Halmich took her lead from the queen of tennis, Billie Jean King. Bobby Riggs, a former Wimbledon and U.S. Open winner and, unapologetically, a male chauvinist, faced King at the Houston Astrodome in 1973 in one of the most famous tennis matches in history and lost, helping to legitimize the women's game.

So when Halmich was challenged to a boxing match by German comedian and talk show host Stefan Raab, she readily agreed. The bout was broadcast on Raab's show, *TV Total*, and the woman dominated her male opponent, convincing the referee on several occasions that he should halt the action. Raab, however, kept convincing the official to allow him to continue.

He finished the fight with a broken nose, and almost overnight women's boxing was taken seriously in Germany, thanks in large part to the fact that more than eight million viewers tuned in to the ProSieben network to watch another male chauvinist get beaten. Like King, Halmich had prevailed in her Battle of the Sexes.

"Although we fought in front of just 1,000 people in Cologne, the ratings for the bout were incredibly high and this was significant because, suddenly, the whole of Germany knew me," Halmich recalled less than a week into her retirement. "At first it was for show, but I ended up throwing at him some hard shots because he's very crazy."

So crazy, in fact, that he demanded a rematch in '07 in which he was again soundly beaten. "He kept asking for another fight and, finally, I said, 'Okay, we can do it,' so we returned to Cologne," Halmich said. "This time, we attracted 19,500 people to the arena and it was a major event. He trained hard for the fight, but he couldn't win. For me, there was too much at stake to let him win."

There was much at stake, too, for the 31-year-old Women's International Boxing Federation flyweight titleholder from Karlsruhe, when she took to the ring in her hometown to face Finer from Israel.

Naturally, she wanted to leave the sport on a personal high, having been beaten only once in her career on her only appearance in America, a fourth-round stoppage by Yvonne "The Terminator" Trevino from Phoenix, after both boxers had been down in the first round at The Aladdin in Las Vegas. Although Halmich knocked Trevino down early in the fight, she could not match her punching power and was floored herself, finishing the fight bloodied badly.

She displayed courage and toughness, but the bout was stopped with Halmich, suffering in particular from damage around her left eye, unable to defend a succession of powerful right hands by Trevino. She returned to Germany to rebuild her career and, in total, amassed 54 wins, 16 by stoppage, winning WIBF titles at junior flyweight, flyweight, and junior bantamweight.

Internationally, her reputation was that of a female Sven Ottke, the former IBF super middleweight titleholder who made 21 title defenses, but never boxed outside of Germany. She boxed once in Poland and once more in Ukraine, but Halmich was content with her role as an evangelist for her sport

in her home country. Over the years, this fed her will to win.

"People in Germany became enormously interested in my career because of my fight with Raab," she revealed. "It wasn't just because it was a man against a woman. This is a guy who is making jokes about people all the time, a bit like Jay Leno in America. He was telling everyone that he was going to break my nose and my ribs and he's a big guy (195 pounds). Some people believed that he was going to hurt me, but they wanted me to win, this little girl against this much bigger man. When I did, it was very important for women's boxing in Germany and everyone began to follow my fights.

"Most of my title fights have been watched by between five million and seven million people on TV and the 7,500-seat arena in Karlsruhe, where I began my career back in 1994, was sold out in 10 days for my fight with Finer," said Halmich.

PHOTO BY LARS BARON/GETTY IMAGES

Halmich's career launched to nationwide popularity in Germany when she pummeled comedian and talk show host Stefan Raab in 2001 in front of an enormous national TV audience. Six years later, the rematch drew 19,500 fans.

Of all her accomplishments, Halmich is perharps proudest of how she may have inspired a generation of female fighters in her country. "With Henry Maske, Darius Michalczewski, Sven Ottke, and the Klitschko brothers being successful in recent years, the timing was just right, I believe, for a female fighter to be a fans' favorite here and I never wanted to let anybody

PHOTO BY JENS SCHLUETER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

In 2004, American Elena Reid held Halmich to a 10-round draw in Karlsruhe. By the time they fought their rematch a year later in Magdeburg, Halmich had Reid figured out and captured a unanimous 10-round decision.

PHOTO BY CHRISTOF KOEPSEL/GETTY IMAGES

Halmich has certainly taken a page out of the Sven Ottke's recipe book for boxing success, fighting almost exclusively in Germany. Halmich ruined many challengers' road trips, including Wendy Rodriguez, in her penultimate fight, in July 2007.

down once things started to go well for me in my boxing career," she said. "I became the symbol for my sport and, suddenly, other women wanted to box because of my success in the ring, and women's boxing has become enormously popular here."

During her first three years as a professional boxer, Halmich worked as a lawyer's assistant for a law firm in Karlsruhe. She had first been introduced to the sport when she accompanied one of her friends to The Bulldog Gym, where she practiced karate and kickboxing. But a trainer named Jurgen Lutz, who is now the president of the WIBF, saw that she had talent and suggested that she should turn her attention to boxing instead.

She had been good at other sports, such as swimming, volleyball, and basketball, but, from the age of 14, she dedicated herself to boxing and has never looked back. After three years with the law firm, she decided that she could make enough money in the ring, so she gave up her job at 21 to concentrate on training full-time under Torsten Schmitz.

Halmich had ventured into the professional kickboxing world with a bout in Tokyo in October 1994, but several kicks to the midsection by her Japanese opponent, Naoko Kumagai, and a hard left to the liver, which resulted in a first-round knockout defeat, convinced her to stick to boxing. In November 1994, she won the WIBF European flyweight title with a 10-round decision over Britain's Cheryl Robertson, who would later become WIBF bantamweight titleholder. Seven months later, Halmich won a 10-round split-decision over against Kim Messer, an American kickboxing star, to take the vacant WIBF flyweight title.

A crowd of 12,000 watched Halmich beat Hungary's Viktoria Pataki in December 1998 in Kiev, and, by July 1999, she was engaging in her 20th title bout, an eight-round stoppage of another Hungarian, Erzsébet Borosi, at the Sporthalle in Augsburg, Germany. In all, she would compete in 46 WIBF title bouts, a reflection perhaps of the lack of depth in her sport, but a phenomenal achievement nonetheless.

Her growing celebrity created multiple endorsement opportunities. She brought out her own range of cosmetics and performed modeling work, even posing nude for the German version of *Playboy* magazine.

"With some of these pictures, I showed that women boxers can be attractive too," she declared. "Many people assumed that women boxers would have misshaped noses and that they would look like men, but I was able to show this isn't true and that was important."

More important to Halmich, however, was the fact that she was almost always in good fights. "This is the only way to keep people interested and, I believe, during the course of my

career, that I've done this," she said. "I always wanted a rematch with Yvonne Trevino because of my defeat against her, but she would never come to Germany.

When Elena Reid held Halmich to a draw in 2004, Regina felt an obligation to the fans to give her a second shot. "She came back to Germany in 2005 and I won by a clear decision over 10 rounds," Halmich said. "In my career I have boxed everyone, all the contenders from number-one to number-10. I have fought them all, so it was very important for me that I should end my career on a high and not stay in boxing so long that I was waiting around for a loss.

"But I didn't want a retirement present. I wanted to beat another world-class opponent and Finer was tough and competitive. I watched her on tape and she was aggressive. I knew she would believe in herself, but I was sure I would win."

Finer's aggression and toughness proved difficult for Halmich, 54-1-1 (16), to overcome and she had to rely on her boxing skills to pave the way to a majority points win on November 30. One of the judges, Esa Lehtosaari (Finland), scored the bout a draw, 95-95, but Robin Dolpierre (France), and Dave Parris (England) scored 97-94 and 96-94 for Halmich.

"I'm happy and proud of the career I've had and the impact I have had on the sport in bringing it to the people of Germany and Europe and making it popular. This is really pleasing," Halmich said. "It was important for me to retire on top and I'm looking forward to spending time with my boyfriend [Andreas Jourdan] and to working as a boxing commentator for ProSieben. I'm looking forward to see where my life will take me."

Halmich was at ringside on December 7 at Sporthalle in Hamburg to commentate on local girl Susi Kentikian's points victory over Nadia Hokmi of France, for her old WIBF flyweight title. "I was so proud to fight for and to win Regina's belt," said Kentikian, nicknamed the "Killer Queen." "She's my hero. In Germany she's made women's boxing what it is." ■

PHOTO BY VLADIMIR RYS/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Halmich is beloved by more than just her parents, who were there to support their daughter after her final fight, in November. Halmich announced her retirement after a 13-year career in which she went the last 12 as an undefeated titlist.

FROM EDISON TO THE INTERNET

A HISTORY OF BOXCASTING

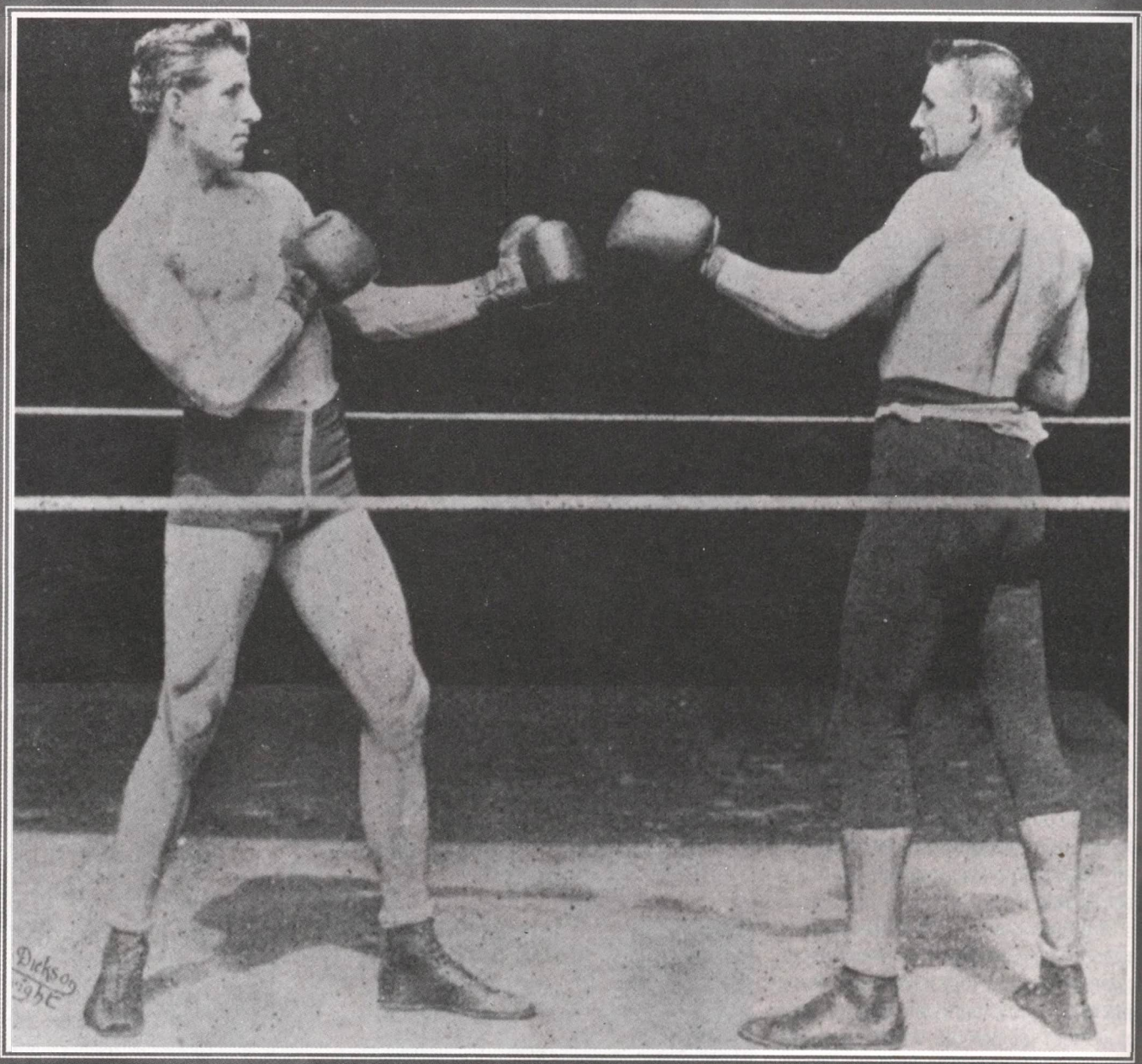


PHOTO BY TATYANA MAKEYEVA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Then and now: Jim Corbett (left) and Peter Courtney square off prior to their 1894 bout that was filmed by Thomas Edison in the inventor's laboratory in West Orange, New Jersey (opposite page). In October 2007, a website had the exclusive rights to Sultan Ibragimov-Evander Holyfield fight (above) in the U.K.

By Don Stradley

Every so often a promoter whose been frustrated in his attempt to find a TV network to carry a fight announces that he's signed an exclusive deal to have a the fight webcast through cyberspace. The promoter, who probably needs his secretary to send his e-mails, describes himself as a visionary. He can't help sounding like Nathan Halpern, president of Theater Network Television, who boasted in 1956 that closed-circuit television would one day be "bigger than the telephone." Internet fans, tired of paying $54.95 for pay-per-views, are

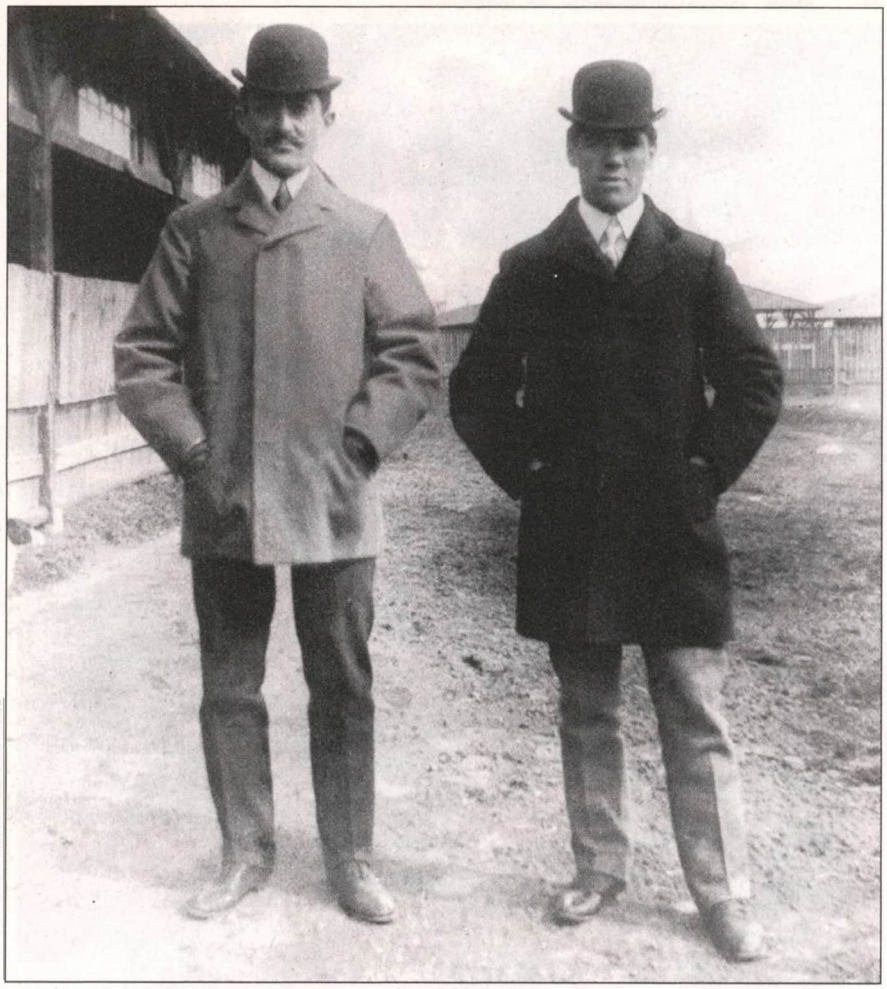


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Manger Sam Harris (left) was miffed when Terry McGovern blew out Pedlar Palmer in the first round of their 1899 bantamweight title fight because the quick ending ruined the opportunity to sell a film of the fight.

webcasting may one day be as expensive and as the current pay-per-view business.

Boxing writer Graham Houston offered a fair summation of the fight game's newest medium after viewing a bout on MaxBoxing.com in October 2006: "I have heard it said that webcasts are the future of boxing. I'm not sure about that—but webcasts do have a future."

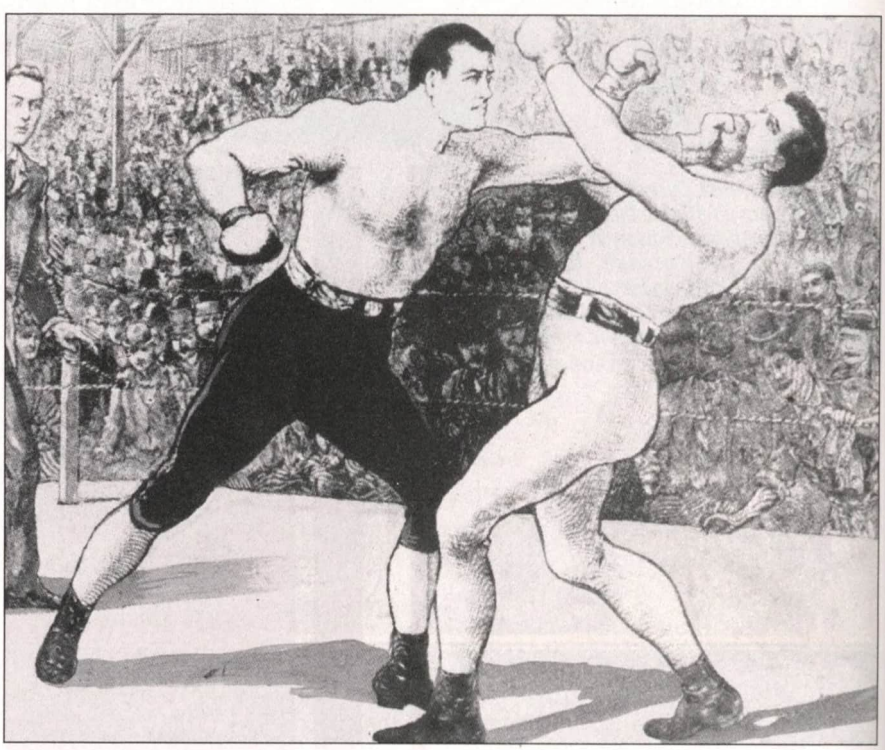
To determine how much of a future, let's look at the past.

When Thomas Alva Edison began experimenting with film, boxing was a favorite subject. On September 8, 1894, heavyweight champion James J. Corbett accepted $5,000 to fight Peter Courtney at Edison's studio in West Orange, New Jersey. The Kinetoscope Exhibition Company hoped the bout would help sell the Kinetoscope, a type of camera that recorded moving images for display in a peep show machine. "A Finish Fight For The Benefit Of Science In Edison's Laboratory," blared the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. The ring was tiny in order fit into the lab. To give the bout a sense of "exhibition" rather than an illegal prizefight, the fighters were fitted with oversized

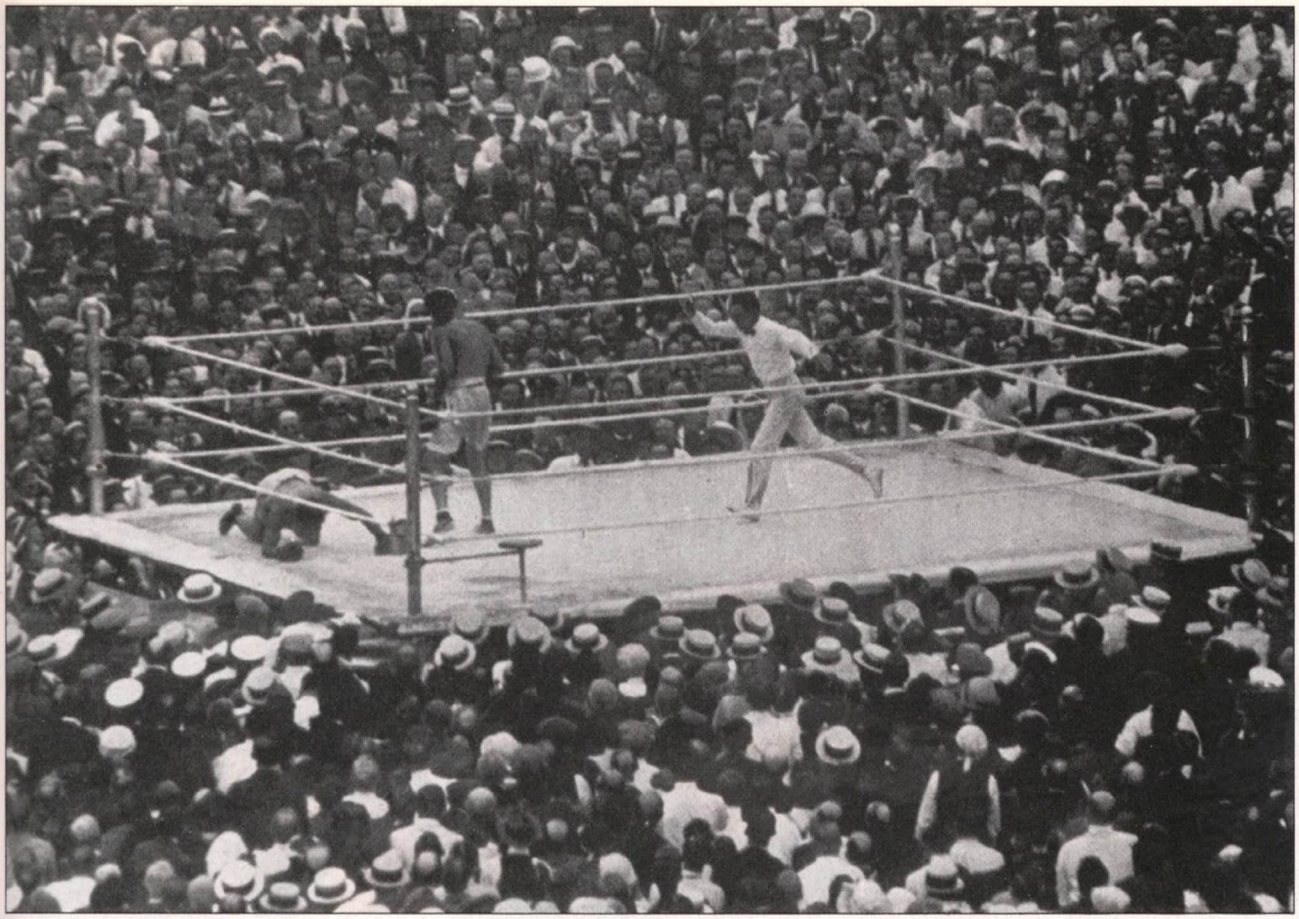
ecstatic at paying $5.99 for a webcast.

"In 10 years," wrote Thomas Hauser in 2005, "it will be common technology for people to watch Internet transmissions on their television sets through high-speed modems with the same picture quality as they enjoy now on regular television." Hauser, it should be noted, writes for SecondsOut.com, the U.K.-based site that has offered many boxing webcasts. The site scored a minor coupe last October by landing U.K. webcast rights for the Sultan Ibragimov-Evander Holyfield bout in Moscow. "I am sure that the future of boxing and many other sports lies in delivering content directly to communities of fans through sophisticated online technology," said Robert Waterman, managing director of SecondsOut.com.

Perhaps. But if old-fashioned American commerce gets in the way,



Boxing fans followed the Corbett-John L. Sullivan fight in 1892 by gathering outside of telegraph offices throughout the United States.



Jack Dempsey's kayo of Frenchman Georges Carpentier in 1921 was not only the first million-dollar gate, it was also the first heavyweight title fight broadcast over the radio. Dempsey knocked out Carpentier in the fourth round.

gloves. Although Corbett was uncomfortable in the makeshift environment, he stopped Courtney in the sixth rounds.

Corbett thought his arrangement with Kinetoscope gave him ownership of the film, but soon Edison would begin manufacturing copies and selling them. In short order we had the first fight on film and the first dispute over rights.

Movie distributors didn't want short fights, so managers and promoters instructed pugs to spend a few rounds warming up. That's why so many fights we see from the 1900s start with the fighters doing very little. When Terry McGovern stopped Pedlar Palmer in one round for the bantamweight championship in 1899, his manager, Sam Harris, was happy for the win but disgruntled that the film rights couldn't be sold. "Ten thousand dollars worth of motion pictures gone up the flue," Harris said. In 1900, the Biograph movie company attempted to film the Jim Jeffries-Tom Sharkey fight in Coney Island. With approximately 200 burning arc lights placed overheard, the arena became an inferno. Jeffries would describe the heat as "hotter than the blast from a locomotive when the fire door is opened." Only a few of the 25 rounds were captured; the film burned.

As movie companies fumbled along, there was still the problem of bringing immediate fight results to the interested masses. The telegraph was first used for boxing in 1849 when Yankee Sullivan fought Tom Hyer. In 1862, when America's John Heenan went to England to fight Tom Sayers, news of the bout was slow in getting back to the USA, so in order to sell newspapers, editors said Heenan won. It took several days for the real news to reach America: The fight had been a draw. The Corbett-John L. Sullivan bout in 1892 created so much interest that most hotels and saloons in large cities were wired to receive descriptions of the fight. *The New York Times* wrote that on Broadway "the line of humanity was like a clumsily knotted thread, with the tangles where stereopticons flashed out the news."

If a fight were important, a large scoreboard would be mounted in the city square. Using a technique that resembled Japanese kabuki theater, puppet-like stick figures would be used to imitate the actions of the fighters. When Jack Johnson fought Jeffries in 1910, the *San Francisco Examiner* set up a ring high above the street and hired two fighters, one black and one white, to mime the fight reports for the crowd below.

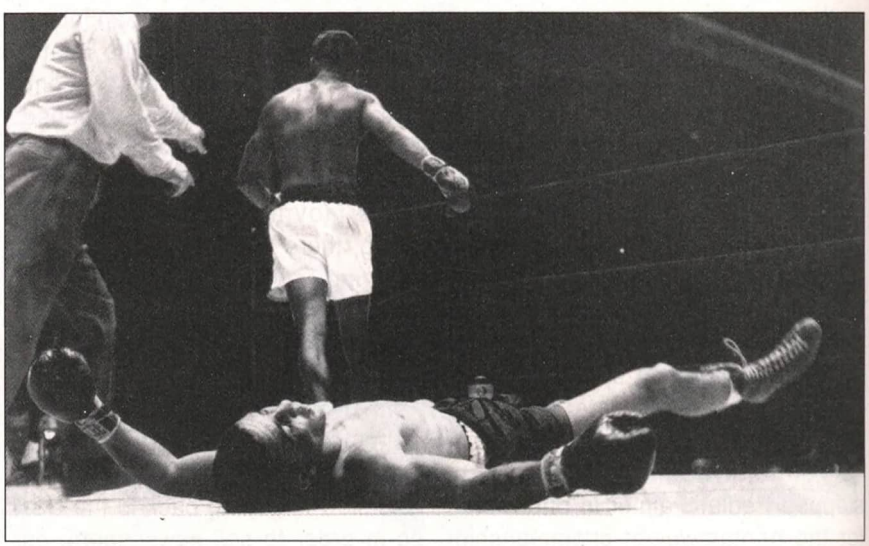
The first radio broadcast of a fight took place in 1921, when the Jack Dempsey-Georges Carpentier bout was broadcast over borrowed Navy equipment. The sound of a live crowd and the frenzied voice of a commentator made radio a perfect and lively medium for boxing. Fans wanting visuals could go to their local movie house a week later and

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

While Joe Louis' knockout of Billy Conn in their 1946 rematch was witnessed by a large crowd at Yankee Stadium, a much smaller group gathered at NBC studio to watch on television, the medium that was soon to revolutionize the sport.

see the newsreel footage or sometimes the entire fight. But while radio and film helped create a golden age of prizefighting, another invention would soon alter boxing coverage forever.

The Joe Louis-Billy Conn rematch of 1946 made history by being the first televised heavyweight championship bout. While 45,266 people saw the fight at Yankee Stadium, an additional 400 attended a viewing party at New York's NBC studio. They saw the bout on a battery of TVs positioned around the room. The screens were no bigger than a napkin. Still, the image was clear, captured by cameras placed 145 feet from the ring. Most members of the press agreed that televised fights were the wave of the future.



Ray Robinson's 1951 kayo of Randy Turpin was an early closed-circuit experiment shown in just 12 locations. By the time Robinson fought Carmen Basilio in '58, the bout was available via closed-circuit at 174 locations in 140 cities across the United States.

Television made fighters into stars. Even journeymen fighters became household names, because they were pumped into living rooms along with Milton Berle and Lucille Ball. But there were problems. Promoters detested television because it cut into live gates, and trainers and managers complained that TV killed the small fight clubs where fighters could gain experience. Promoters battled to have fights blacked out locally to

encourage people to buy tickets, but didn't always get their way. Promoters needed something other than television to make big fights seem bigger. By 1951 they'd found it.

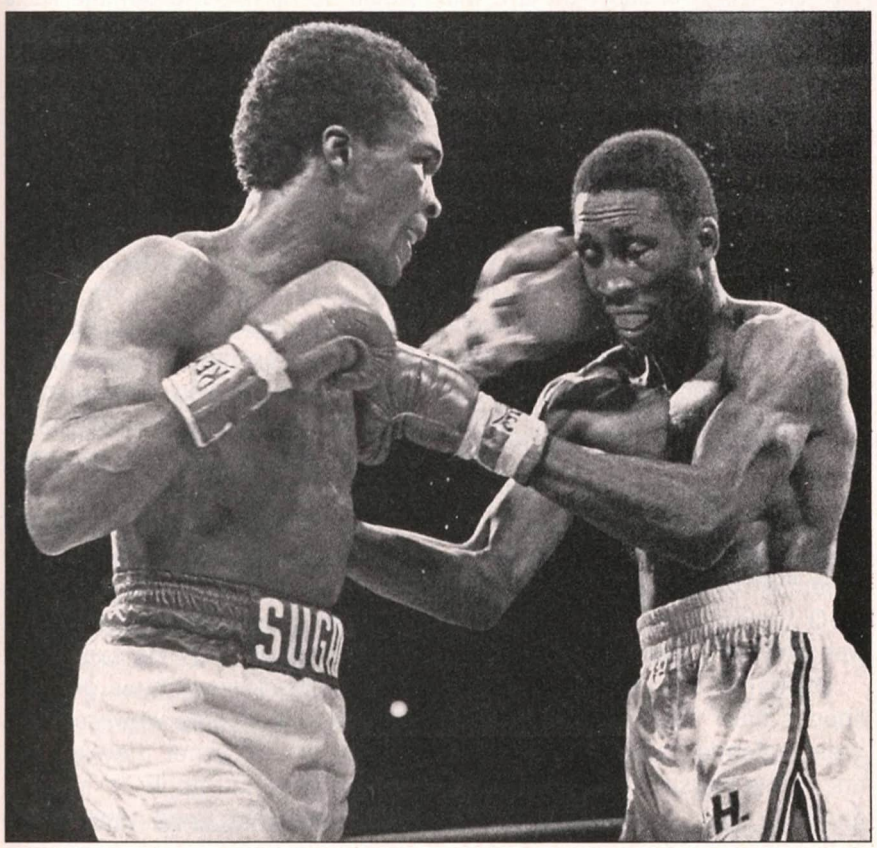
Closed-circuit television, originally used by the German military to view rocket launches, was a live telecast directed to a specific theater, drive-in, hotel, or arena. One of the first closed-circuit fights was the 1951 Ray Robinson-Randy Turpin rematch, modestly scheduled for 12 locations. In some cities it worked. Fans actually stood up during the national anthem and screamed when Robinson won. In other cities it was disastrous. The State Lake Theater in Chicago was damaged as nearly 1,000 fans tried storming in for free. Still, the closed-circuit idea worked. By the time Robinson fought Carmen Basilio in 1958, 174 theaters across 140 cities were employed. Ticket sales reached nearly 365,000. Robinson started asking for a percentage of the closed-circuit revenue.

By the 1960s, closed-circuit television was the norm for big fights. The kinks were never entirely worked out—occasionally the signal would die, and to the horror of theater owners, the unruly boxing mob would start heaving chairs at the screen. More than one theater was trashed during the age of closed-circuit boxing.

Closed-circuit fights continued into the 1980s, but as cable-television became a fixture in more households, the concept of closed-circuit screenings would be supplanted by pay-TV.

The first boxing event offered on pay-TV was the 1981 Ray Leonard-Thomas Hearns bout. By the 1990s, pay-TV became pay-per-view, and HBO offered its own PPV arm. As prices rose, cable thieves used "pirate boxes" to receive PPV events without paying. With the advent of digital service, incidents of cable theft are becoming rare.

Internet piracy is far more widespread than cable piracy. The music industry deals with file sharing, the boxing world has "fight sharing." Whether sneaking into theaters or



The Ray Leonard-Thomas Hearns welterweight title fight in 1981 was an early pay-TV event, a medium that later became known as pay-per-view.

DON'T MISS

RING UPDATE WITH WILLIAM DETTLOFF

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Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, *The Ring*'s senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The dangers of boxing: "Long after you and I and everyone we know are long gone, men will still be fighting one another with their fists, and sometimes bad things will happen as a result. You may feel guilty about that fact if you wish. I will not."

Nicolay Valuev: "He's hairier than Robin Williams and facially looks an awful lot like Lurch from *The Addams Family*. In today's heavyweight division, that can get you a good long way."

The lack of a dominant heavyweight: "When a heavyweight champ is dominant, the only fun comes in wondering when someone will cut him down to size and how. We rush a guy to the top of the mountain just for the pleasure of watching him get knocked off."

Dettloff on thering-online.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

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PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

There was an attempt to webcast the Manny Pacquiao-Marco Antonio Barrera rematch in the Philippines, but it was canceled due to contractual difficulties. Some expect the Internet to become a major vehicle for big-time boxing.

stealing PPV signals, boxing fans have always been tricky when it comes to paying for fights. The Internet generation, not concerned with the details of copyright law, will carry on the tradition.

Since 2000, many bouts have been shown on the web, but things are not moving as quickly as once predicted. Some webcast companies have learned that it's not the Wild West out there in cyberspace. Filipino fans in the Middle East were ready to watch the live stream video of the Pacquiao-Barrera rematch on netvision.com, only to learn that HBO had forced the Filipino company to cancel it. HBO was well within its rights—there were contract conflicts on the international rights for the Internet webcast—but Pacquiao's pinoy fans, who often rely on American relatives to transmit his HBO fights over the Internet via webcam, felt bullied.

On paper, the webcast dream sounds fine. "Internet boxing is of great potential interest to promoters," wrote Hauser. "It would cut production costs. It would break the stranglehold on pay-per-view transmissions currently enjoyed by In Demand, DirectTV, and Echo Star. And, most significantly, it would eliminate the need for local cable-system operators. That means there would be no need to pay the cable companies 50 cents on every dollar of pay-per-view revenue."

In reality, it's not so easy. "There's a lot of red tape, regarding world rights, or country rights," said Gary Randall of MaxBoxing.com. "Let's say HBO wants to show a major fight on the Internet. There are ways to do it, but they don't want to hurt their subscribership, or piss off DirectTV. The deals you'd have to work are so detailed, with so many different companies. A mid-level HBO fight would actually be easier than a pay-per-view."

Randall believes webcasts should be marketed to the people who most enjoy the interactive aspect of the 'net.

"Show it on HBO, and then offer it online an hour later," he suggested. "The webcast would have different camera angles, and viewers could choose which corner they want to hear, and which angle to see the fight. That would work, and they'd absolutely get a lot of sponsors. Even if it was shown on free TV,

these particular fans would still go to the Internet. We're in the time where it can happen, but nothing's been done.

"The obstacles are the promoters, because they'll ask for so much more money. No one is willing to be the pioneer. If I could get someone as popular as Fernando Vargas, and Miller Light wanted to sponsor, I'd do it. Edwin Valero is an Internet phenom, you could do it with him. You have to start, though, and build him over two or three fights. But it can't be done without trial and error, and no one wants to make the leap."

The biggest reason could be this: Radio broke in with Dempsey, television with Louis, closed-circuit had Robinson, pay-TV had Leonard. Without a superstar to entice millions of viewers, webcasting may remain a novelty for only the most hardcore fans. "You'd need a huge fighter to start off with a bang," said Randall. But in the old days, boxing was a lure to sell TV sets and radios, not the other way around. In 2008, you don't need boxing to sell the Internet, because most people already have the Internet.

MaxBoxing.com's webcast of Kermit Cintron vs. Mark Suarez in October 2006 drew 3,500 paid viewers. The following webcast, featuring Joan Guzman against Antonio Davis, in December 2006, drew a mere 200 buys. MaxBoxing.com has not webcast a bout since. "We've had offers," said Randall, "but the fighters were unknowns."

An elite fighter like Floyd Mayweather may be agreeable help kickstart the webcast revolution, but he would not be willing to make himself the medium's sacrificial lamb. Radio personality Howard Stern lost the bulk of his audience by making the jump from terrestrial radio the satellite, but he was very well compensated for doing so.

The promotional company who would be willing to sacrifice today for what might be tomorrow's goldmine could be in a position to rule cyberspace medium for years to come. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

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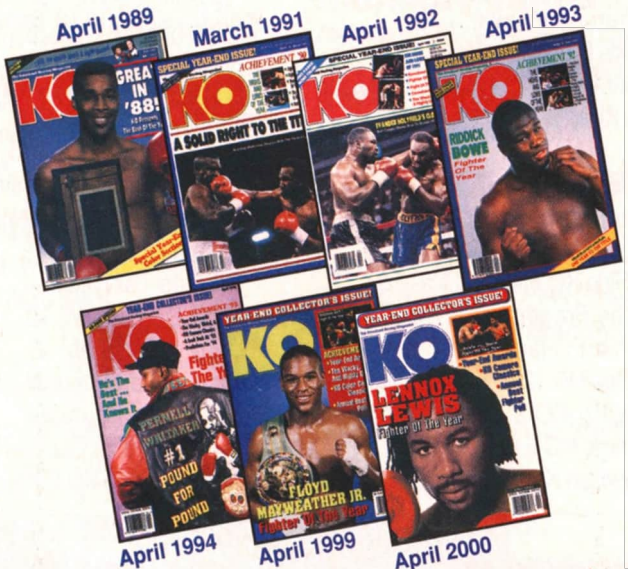

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[Summary]

Heavyweights

Alex Leapai KO 8 Nathan Briggs
Malik Scott W 10 Damian Norris
Jaromir Soukup KO 7 Pavel Siska
Adnan Buharalija KO 5 Valentin Marinel
Fabio Moli KO 5 Lisandro Diaz
Ezra Sellers KO 3 Kenny Craven
Konstantin Airich KO 2
Turhan Altunkaya
Tye Fields KO 1 Chris Koval
Harry Duiven Jr. KO 1 Stefan Baumann
Michael Kirby W 8 Pat Kennedy

Cruiserweights

Krzysztof Wlodarczyk KO 5
Aloryi Mensah
Herbie Hide KO 6 Mikhail Nasyrov
Giacobbe Fragomeni W 12
Rachid El Hadak
Stefan Raaff W 12 Rene Huebner
Ali Ismailov KO 9 Alejandro Alvarez
Carl Daniels KO 6 Fred Moore
Johny Jensen KO 2 Vincenzo Cantatore

Light Heavyweights

Danny Green W 12 Stipe Drews
(Wins WBA Title)
Antonio Tarver KO 4 Danny Santiago
Drago Janjusevic KO 5 Djamel Selini
Dawid Kostecki KO 2
Antonio Quiganga
Damon McCreary KO 2 Salah Zabian
Jindrich Velecky KO 3 Tamas Popovics

Super Middleweights

Anthony Mundine KO 4
Jose Alberto Clavero
Jeff Lacy W 10 Peter Manfredo
Jean Pascal W 10 Brian Norman
Michael Henrotin W 12
Mantas Tarvydas
Paulino Da Silva W 10
Joey Ainscough
Natascha Ragosina W 10
Akondaye Fountain
Jose Santos KO 4 Douglas Dias
Daniel McKinnon KO 3 Kerey Palmer

Middleweights

Arthur Abraham KO 5 Wayne Elcock
(Retains IBF Title)
John Duddy W 10 Howard Eastman
Enrique Ornelas KO 5 Bronco McKart
Daniel Geale W 12 Daniel Dawson
Sebastian Demers W 12
Mohammad Said
Vedran Akrap W 12 Andrei Shamansky
Luciano Cuello W 10 Alejandro Falliga
Andy Lee KO 6 Jason McKay
Diosbelys Hurtado W 6 Rafael Chiruta
Giovanni Lorenzo KO 1 Ulises Duarte
Koji Sato KO 3 Manabu Komatsu
Peter Quillin KO 2 Troy Lowry
Joe Greene W 8 Patrick Thompson
Mark Lloyd KO 8 Martin Marshall
Pablo Medina KO 3 Ricardo Genero
Mary Jo Sanders KO 4 Veronia Rucker

Junior Middleweights

Vernon Forrest KO 11 Michele Piccirillo
(Retains WBC Title)

PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUYS/GETTY IMAGES

Super middleweight Jeff Lacy slams Peter Manfredo with a left hook

Joachim Alcine KO 12
Alfonso Mosquera
(Retains WBA Title)
Pawel Wolak W 10 Sammy Sparkman
Danny Butler W 10 Terry Adams
Gpjko KNezevic W 10 Ronny Mittag
Turgay Uzun W 10 Pietro d'Alessio
Matthew Hatton W 8 Frankie Santos
Gary Woolcombe KO 8 Marcus Portman
James Kirkland KO 1 Allen Conyers
Ryan Waters KO 6 Lee Oti
Yory Boy Campas KO 5 Fernando Vela
Joel Juarez KO 5 Omar Vasquez
Nilson Tapia KO 2 Santiago Samaniego
Ryan Waters KO 6 Lee Oti

Welterweights

Floyd Mayweather KO 10 Ricky Hatton
(Retains World Title)
Joshua Clottey W 12 Shamone Alvarez
Hamza Issa W 12 Ruben Diaz
Yuriy Nuzhnenko W 12 Frederic Klose
Victor Plotnikov W 12 Carlos Donquiz
Craig Watson KO 9 Ali Nuumbembe
Tadashi Yuba KO 1
Akibei Ushiwakamaru
Said Quali KO 8 Sven Paris
Vitaliy Demyanenko KO 8
Kiatchai Singwancha
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 6
Ray Sanchez
Hiroshi Yamaguchi KO 3 Akio Shibata
Hassan Saku KO 3 Bagaza Mwambene
Norberto Gonzalez KO 2 Victor Marquez

Junior Welterweights

Sirimongkol Singwancha W 12
Arnel Porras
Yoshihiro Kamegai W 10
Daisuke Hata
Khoirul Huda W 10 Immanuel Bay
Alex de Jesus W 12 Steve Quinonez
Humberto Gutierrez KO 7
Rodrigo Juarez
Javier Castro KO 7 Jorge Lopez
Vernon Paris KO 7 Kevin Carmody
Javier Cubedo KO 6 Gonzalo Juzaino
Antonio Fitch KO 4 Pipino Cuevas Jr.
Danny Garcia KO 1 Jesus Villareal

Lightweights

Amir Khan KO 1 Graham Earl
Edner Cherry KO 6 Wes Ferguson
Francisco Lorenzo W 10 Manuel Valdes
Jorge Luis Teron KO 8 Adrian Navarrete
Peter Semo KO 4 Chaurembo Palasa
Miguel Huerta KO 3 Daniel Alicea
Ranee Ganoy KO 2 Somchai Nakbalee
Urbano Antillon KO 1 Adrian Valdez

Junior Lightweights

Edwin Valero KO 3 Zaid Zavaleta
(Retains WBA Title)
Alex Arthur W 12 Stephen Foster
Benoit Gaudet W 12 Alberto Garza
Sergey Gulyakevich W 12
Leva Kirakosyan
Yoshimitsu Yashiro W 10
Koji Kawamura
Edgar Riovalle W 10 Arturo Gomez
Luis Gonzalez W 10 Trini Rodriguez
Vicente Rodriguez KO 5 Diego Mora
Malcolm Klassen KO 5 Pablo Oliveto
Uriel Barrera KO 5 Jeremias Segovia
Masayuki Koguchi KO 5 Tomoya Endo
Simson Butar KO 2 Van Bantilan

Featherweights

Jorge Linares KO 8 Gamaliel Diaz
(Retains WBC Title)
Cyril Thomas KO 10 Hevinson Herrera
Kelsey Jeffries W 10 Yun-Jung Jun
Orlando Salido KO 6 Hector Avila
Toshiaki Nishioka KO 9
Pederito Laurente
Walter Estrada KO 5 Elmer Reales
Abdul Tebazalwa KO 5 Obote Ameme
Jackson Asiku KO 4 Matt Powell
Guty Espadas KO 4 Eduardo Robledo

Junior Featherweights

Celestino Caballero KO 8
Maurico Pastrana
(Retains WBA Title)
Daniel Ponce De Leon W 12
Eduardo Escobedo
Rey Bautista W 12 Antonio Meza
Genaro Garcia W 12 Miguel Roman
Sande Otieno W 12 Marcel Kasimov
Davey Browne W 10 Roberto Lerio
Massimo Morra W 10 Emiliano Salvini
Fernando Beltran Jr. KO 10
Jose Arboleda
Akifumi Shimoda W 10
Hidenori Kobayashi
Wilfredo Vazquez Jr. D 8
Jorge Cardenas
Kazunori Takayama KO 4
Rikiya Fukuhara
Damir Bulatov KO 1
Alexander Kavalenia

Bantamweights

Ian Napa W 12 Martin Power
Richard Samosir W 10 Hari Suhariyadi
Jorge Arce KO 1 Medgoen Singsurat
Vusi Malinga KO 5 Sergio Caruso
Jason Booth KO 9 Matthew Edmonds
Simpiwe Vetyeka KO 8
Lubabalo Msuthu
Carmelo Ballone KO 8
Eugen Sorin Tanasie
Giovanni Andrade KO 6 Sergio Rodriguez
Diego Hernandez KO 5 Mario Narvaes

Junior Bantamweights

Zolile Mbityi W 12 Mangaliso Dyantyi
Chris Edwards W 12 Jamie McDonnel
Andy Bell W 10 Wayne Bloy
Hiroyuki Hisataka W 10
Hussein Hussein
A.J. Banal KO 9 Jovanny Soto
Jean Perez KO 8 Adolfo Ramos
Falazona Fidal KO 5 Sairung Suwanasil
Ricardo Nunez KO 2 Elvis Garcia
Alesia Graf W 10 Esmeralda Moreno

Flyweights

Nonito Donaire KO 8 Luis Maldonado
(Retains IBF Title)
Carlos Tamara W 12
Alejandro Hernandez
Hayato Kimura W 10 Jooin Ryoo
Takahisa Masuda W 10 Wido Paez
Kenji Yoshida W 10 Tsunejiro Sato
Regina Halmich W 10 Hagar Finer
Andrea Sarritzu KO 7
Lahcene Zemmouri

Junior Flyweights

Ivan Calderon W 12 Juan Esquer
(Retains World Title)
Brahim Asloum W 12
Juan Carlos Reveco
(Wins WBA Title)
Ulises Solis KO 9 Bert Batawang
(Retains IBF Title)
Adrian Hernandez KO 6 Oscar Satumino

Strawweights

Oleydong Sithsamerchai W 12
Eagle Kyowa
(Wins WBC Title)
Rtyan Bito W 12 Rodel Tejares
Suguru Takizawa KO 2
Chansaknoi Sakrungruan
Junichiro Kaneda W 10 Yoko Gushiken

Kermit Cintron KO 10 Jesse Feliciano

Los Angeles, California: This contest was a mystery. Everyone expected a short night when the hard-hitting Cintron was brought in to get himself some work against a tough kid without much pop who'd already been stopped three times. But never-say-die Feliciano had already gone 1-1-1 against popular Alfonso Gomez of *The Contender* fame, and he'd also defeated Vince Phillips by majority decision only a year earlier. The two welterweights were there to do little more than fill out the undercard of Ricardo Mayorga-Fernando Vargas at the Staples Center, but Feliciano ended up giving Cintron a worrisome night before the IBF titleholder pulled out the victory.

The mystery of Cintron's struggle was at least partially solved when he explained afterward that he felt something in his right hand crack the very first time he used it in round one. Add to that the courage and determination of Feliciano, and it turned out to be a long night for both of them. Feliciano, 15-6-3 (9), never stopped trying as he took the fight in close to a visibly tiring Cintron, 29-1 (27), coming forward no matter what he ran into. And Feliciano ran into plenty, but he was also scoring repeatedly. Underdog Feliciano, 147, who was born in L.A. and now fights out of Las Vegas, had the crowd on his side against Puerto Rico-born Cintron, 146¾, Reading, Pennsylvania.

Even though Cintron, 28, was fighting mostly with one hand, the 25-year-old Feliciano was able to expose some holes in his technique. Cintron, making his second defense since winning the vacant alphabet belt 13 months earlier, often appeared strangely tranquil, almost listless between explosions, and he displayed little proficiency on the inside, failing to move side to side to get better angles.

Cintron rarely got the distance he needed to land his signature powershots, but finally in round 10 of a surprisingly even contest, he ripped his opponent with a sizzling left hook to the head. He followed up with a sustained combination, forcing referee Jon Schorle (USA) to call a halt at 1:53 of the round, though a still upright Feliciano disputed the stoppage.

In one more surprise, it was Cintron who then fell to

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

The pain in his right hand is too great for Cintron (the winner!) to bear

the canvas, explaining later that the pain in his right hand had become unbearable. He failed to make the kind of impressive showing he'd hoped for, and he displayed some flaws, but he also proved he's no quitter. Meanwhile, Feliciano pointed out afterward that it was he, not his opponent, who was on his feet at the end.

Though Floyd Mayweather rules the division as the true champion, Cintron was to take a step toward legitimizing himself in his next fight, a bout against fellow titlist Paul Williams set for February. Due to Cintron's hand injury, however, he had to withdraw. Whether the fight will be rescheduled for later in the year remains to be seen.

Television: **Showtime Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **Don King Promotions, Main Events**
(11-23-07)
Ivan Goldman

Roman Karmazin KO 3
Alejandro Garcia

Los Angeles, California: Karmazin was quick, accurate, obviously very comfortable in there, and way too much for slugger Garcia, who took a knee to get eight seconds of relief in the very first round of their scheduled 12-rounder. Russian Karmazin, now fighting out of Los Angeles, where he trains with Freddie Roach, is 34 and Garcia 27, but their ages looked reversed.

Karmazin, 36-2-1 (23), got the distance he preferred, and from there he snapped a variety of shots at his opponent, not neglecting the body. Garcia, 25-3 (24), managed to land a formidable right at the end of round one. This allowed Karmazin, 154, to prove he also has a chin and further damaged the hopes off Team Garcia. After all, how many times would their outclassed junior middleweight be able to catch well-schooled Karmazin like that again?

A punishing bodyshot followed by a quick, thudding right hand to the head put Garcia, 154, Tijuana, Mexico, down again in round three, and referee Raul Caiz Jr. (USA) counted him out at 1:24 of the round.

Karmazin, who lost the IBF title 18 months earlier to hometowner Cory Spinks in St. Louis by majority decision, was supposed to earn another title shot with this victory, or at least get closer to one in the Byzantine world of alphabet politics, a world with which his promoter, Don King, has more than a passing acquaintance. The most interesting matchups for him would probably be against Vernon Forrest or Oscar De La Hoya. But De La Hoya apparently now competes only on Cinco de Mayo weekend and only takes superfights, severely limiting him as a possibility. Besides, he might go back down to welterweight. Forrest would seem a more realistic option. But if Karmazin can get hold of a title or the vacant RING 154-pound champi-

[THE RING Fighter of the Month]

Floyd Mayweather

On HBO's *24/7* documentary program, Ricky Hatton openly mocked the pitty-pay punches of Floyd Mayweather. Specifically, he ridiculed the flashy pad work of the welterweight champ, and begged Mayweather to hit him with punches like that.

Something tells us Hatton has a little more respect for Mayweather's power now.

That Mayweather defeated the British "Hitman" was no great surprise, but few picked him to win inside the distance, and those who did mostly believed the ending would come on cuts, not on a true kayo. But Mayweather is not just a slick boxer. He can pop a little bit when the situation calls for it, and the one-time junior lightweight combined slick boxing with powerful punching to stop Hatton in the 10th round in his most complete performance in several years.

When you're a true world champion, the pound-for-pound king, and the Fighter of the Year, being named Fighter of the Month really isn't such a big deal. It's just another small honor in a career full of noteworthy achievements. But it's a small honor that you couldn't possibly suggest belongs to anyone else this month.

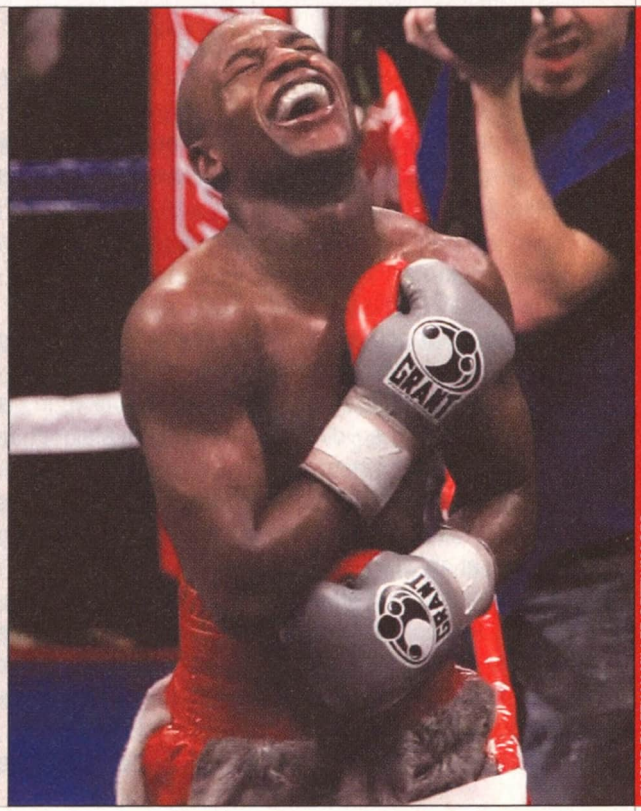

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Karmazin disposes of Garcia midway through the third

onship by winning a rematch with Spinks, something bigger might come to him.

Television: **Showtime Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **Don King Promotions, Main Events**
(11-23-07)
Ivan Goldman

Nonito Donaire KO 8 Luis Maldonado

Ledyard, Connecticut: Donaire was a 7-1 underdog when he shocked Vic Darchinyan to capture the IBF flyweight title in July. After seeing how good he looked in his first defense, against solid veteran contender Maldonado at Foxwoods Casino, it's safe to say Donaire won't be a 7-1 'dog again anytime soon. In fact, it's quite likely that there isn't another flyweight in the world against whom he'd be an underdog at all.

The 25-year-old Donaire, 111, San Leandro, California, via Talibon, Philippines, carried over the confidence from his win over Darchinyan from the opening bell, using his quickness and counterpunching skill to take control immediately. Looking relaxed, Donaire rocked Maldonado, 111, Mexicali, Mexico, with a counter left hook to the chin in the first round, and in the second, an overhand right opened a cut near the 29-year-old challenger's right left eye. Another right hand jolted Maldonado moments later, and a Donaire left hook soon opened a second cut on the Mexican's face, this one near his right eye. The rout was on.

But Maldonado, who had only lost previously to Darchinyan (and impressively drew against talented 115-pounder Cristian Mijares in '06), wasn't easy to discourage. Though he didn't necessarily win any rounds, he kept trying his best, and he did land a couple of solid left hooks to the jaw in the fourth. Donaire answered back in the fifth, however, with a hard right hand to the body that clearly hurt the challenger.

Late in the seventh round, Donaire scored with a beautiful counter hook, then he hurt the bloody Maldonado in the closing seconds with two more lefts and a right uppercut. Maldonado staggered back, and Donaire unleashed a wicked left hook to the jaw that knocked the Mexican down just before the bell was about to ring. It was only the second knockdown suffered in Maldonado's career, and he rose quickly at American referee Charlie Dwyer's count of three. The bell rang immediately, and Maldonado stumbled back to his corner a bloody mess. There, ringside doctor Michael Schwartz took a close look at the cut over Maldonado's left eye before deeming him okay to continue.

The fight lasted only another 76 seconds, however. Two left hooks to the face sent Maldonado into the ropes, where Donaire pinned him for an extended period, landing numerous punches. Dwyer would have been justified in stepping in at any time, and he finally did after a vicious left hook the body, with the brave Maldonado, 37-2-1 (28), still on his feet.

"I knew Maldonado was tough," Donaire, 19-1 (12), said afterward. "He's a great fighter and he has a lot of courage. I respect him and his effort tonight."

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Gary Shaw Productions**
(12-1-07)

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

A bloody Maldonado is nearly defenseless against Donaire

Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 6 Ray Sanchez III

Albuquerque, New Mexico: Headlining on pay-per-view for the first time, Chavez scored an impressive sixth-round knockout over local favorite Sanchez before a crowd of 6,077 at Tingley Coliseum. The bout was by far the best on the card from an entertainment perspective, and Chavez showed a fair amount of his father's toughness and finishing ability.

Sanchez, with his record of 20-1 (15) coming in, southpaw stance, and driving left hand, represented Chavez' toughest opponent to date. But Chavez' chin, poise, and persistent pressure paved the way to victory.

Sanchez, 149, Albuquerque, showed no fear against Chavez, 150, Culiacan, Mexico, and, until the end of the second, was outboxing him from the outside, jabbing and landing straight lefts. Chavez, however, took the shots well and, in the final 10 seconds of round two, cracked Sanchez with an uppercut that buckled his knees.

The next three rounds went back and forth: Sanchez, 24, outboxed Chavez from the outside, but, when trapped against the ropes, Sanchez was staggered several times by lefts and rights from the patient second-generation fighter. The hometown kid stood his ground until, a minute into the sixth, Chavez let loose with a barrage that dropped Sanchez to his knees for American referee Russell Mora's 10-count at 1:33 of the round.

It was the 21-year-old Chavez' most meaningful win yet—though, at the time of the stoppage, he was behind on the scorecards. Both of the Albuquerque judges, Margaret Garcia and Bill Gant, had Sanchez up 49-46, while Chuck Giampa of Las Vegas had Chavez on top, 48-47. THE RING had it 48-47 for Sanchez before the knockout.

"I knew it would take more than one punch," said Chavez, 34-0-1 (27). "But you can see the combos finally put him down. He hits very hard and will continue in his career.

"I think I'm almost ready for a title fight," Chavez added.

Bob Arum, Chavez' promoter, disagreed about the timetable. "Realistically, it will probably be 2009," Arum

Ivan Calderon W 12 Juan Esquer

Albuquerque, New Mexico: In the only world title fight on the Chavez-Sanchez card, Puerto Rico's Calderon made his first defense of THE RING and WBO junior flyweight titles by outboxing, outrunning, outdancing, and outpointing Mexico's Esquer.

The gutsy Mexican, only 21 years old and virtually unknown entering this world championship opportunity, poured on the pressure from the opening bell and didn't stop until the final bell clanged—though it did him little good against the slick, speedy Calderon. Whether he was standing in the center of the ring, dipping and ducking punches, or flying around the perimeter of the ring, Calderon, 107, piled up the points with Esquer, 108, in hot pursuit.

Esquer, able only to pin down Calderon for brief exchanges, threw a lot but also missed a lot, and those punches he landed were taken well by the iron-chinned "Iron Boy."

At the end of 12, the scores ranged from a lopsided 118-112 from Bill Gant (USA) to 116-112 from Levi Martinez (USA) to 115-113 from Chuck Giampa (USA), all for Calderon, 30-0 (6). THE RING had it 116-112 for the 32-year-old Calderon. The referee was Russell Mora (USA).

With the loss, Esquer dropped to 20-2-1 (15), but probably earned more acclaim for pressing the fight against the best 108-pounder in the world and losing than he has for any of his victories.

Television: **Top Rank Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(12-1-07)
Chris Cozzone

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Chavez Jr. goes to the body against Sanchez

said. "He answered a lot of questions tonight. He showed he can take a punch. He threw a variety of punches and his composure was great."

Television: **Top Rank Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(12-1-07)
Chris Cozzone

Jorge Arce KO 1 Medgoen Singsurat

Albuquerque, New Mexico: In the co-feature to the Chavez-Sanchez fight at Tingley Coliseum, Mexican star and former titleholder "Travieso" Arce scored a much-needed impressive knockout, recording a quick annihilation of Thailand's Medgoen. Though the Thai briefly held a fly-weight title after defeating Manny Pacquiao in 1999, he'd been on the downslide for years and this win meant little for Arce. However, it did provide some positive momentum for the popular 28-year-old on the heels of a loss to Cristian Mijares and an unexpected struggle against Tomas Rojas.

Just over a half-minute into the fight, after trapping Medgoen, 118, against the ropes, Arce, 116½, buried his left glove into the 29-year-old Thailander's side, dropping him to the canvas, where he was counted out by referee Rocky Burke (USA) after just 48 seconds of action.

"I knew I could connect with the left," said Arce, 48-4-1 (37). "We worked on it in the gym and it was a perfect shot." Medgoen fell to 53-5 (39) with the defeat, all of his losses coming by kayo.

Next up for Arce will probably be a 115-pound showdown against Martin Castillo, with dates in February being considered as of press time.

"It should be a great fight," promised Arce.

Television: **Top Rank Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(12-1-07)
Chris Cozzone

Celestino Caballero KO 8 Mauricio Pastrana

Panama City, Panama: When you stand 5'3½" tall and your opponent is 5'11", it's obvious that you need to get inside to win, and, in all likelihood, you'll need to absorb some punishment to do that. Unfortunately for the diminutive Pastrana, he absorbed the punishment from the tall and lean Caballero without ever succeeding in getting in close enough to do damage of his own and was stopped in the eighth round. The victory marked Caballero's third successful defense of the WBA super bantamweight belt and reinforced his standing as the most deserving challenger to the winner of the upcoming Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez rubber match for the legitimate 122-pound championship.

This bout at the Roberto Duran Gymnasium featured an almost comical height disparity, reminiscent of the Diego Corrales-John Brown junior lightweight fight from eight years earlier. Caballero, 122, Panama City, used his long left jab from the start and followed frequently with his jolting right hand, keeping the fight at long range. Pastrana, 121, Miami, Florida, via Monteria, Colombia, who first hit the

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Arce's left hand was too much for an overwhelmed Singsurat

scene as a 108-pound titlist, simply couldn't get anything done, his 34-year-old body lacking the explosiveness to close the distance against the much more well-preserved 31-year-old beltholder. After seven entirely futile rounds for Pastrana, 34-8-2 (22), a brutal assault from Caballero, 28-2 (19), led referee Roberto Ramirez (Puerto Rico) to stop the fight 53 seconds into round eight.

There was talk afterward of possible retirement for Pastrana. Certainly, at his age and size, it isn't going to get any easier for him to score significant wins in this weight class.

Promoter: **Promociones y Eventos del Istmo**
(12-1-07)

Oleydong Sithsamerchai W 12
Eagle Kyowa

Bangkok, Thailand: When WBC minimumweight beltholder Eagle decided to return to his native Thailand after seven years of fighting in Japan, it was intended to be a homecoming party. Instead, he found himself traveling back to Japan sans belt, now questioning whether he'll be able to recapture the title he held for more than two years.

While mismatches continue to be a problem in Thailand, this fight offered a step in the right direction by pairing two of the best the country has to offer. The bout between Eagle—currently calling himself Eagle Den Janlapan—and Oleydong drew a huge crowd to an outdoor, makeshift arena, with fans keen to see the highly regarded Eagle defending against the undefeated challenger.

Oleydong, 105, made it clear from the opening bell he would not stand in front of Eagle, 104¾, electing instead to move side to side. The 29-year-old titlist fought aggressively, smiling continuously and advancing without fear while launching the straight right at his southpaw opponent's head.

For the first three rounds, the bout was tit-for-tat, with Oleydong, 22, scoring with short, sneaky lefts then sliding to his right, and Eagle landing sporadically with his jab. Eagle pressed forward, relentless in his attack, but was relatively ineffective against the quick-footed Oleydong. By the fourth round, Oleydong looked to be tiring, his face showing signs of wear from the stiff jabs. It was in the middle rounds, however, when he would do his best work and tally the necessary points to get the victory.

Under the WBC's open scoring policy, the scores after four rounds were 38-38, 38-38, and 39-38 in favor of Oleydong.

By the sixth, Oleydong had caught his second wind and was landing his jab-cross combination more often. He continued to stick to his strategy of moving side to side and deftly sliding out of range of Eagle's increasingly wild punches. After eight, the judges had the bout in favor of Oleydong, 78-75, 78-75, and 78-74.

Recognizing the upset was within his grasp, Oleydong stayed up on his toes and stuck to his game plan: movement. Whether because he was simply too quick or Eagle was too slow, Oleydong managed to make his opponent look clumsy and confused throughout the bout. In the final rounds, though, with Oleydong slowing, Eagle finally closed the gap and scored on the inside. But it was too late, and a stunned Eagle, 18-2 (6), could do nothing to save his title.

All three of the judges scored in favor of Oleydong: Ferdinand Estrella (Philippines) scored the bout 117-112, Brian McMahon (Australia) had it 115-114, and Gerald Ritter (USA) scored it 115-113. THE RING concurred, scoring it 116-112. Oleydong will reportedly fight a tuneup bout early next year and then travel to Japan to give Eagle a rematch.

"I'm proud of the way I fought today," said Oleydong, 25-0 (10). "My opponent was good, he was strong. I knew he would come at me with everything."

The event was dedicated to Thailand's King Bhumipol Adulyadej, who turned 80 on December 5.

The referee was Laurentino Ramirez (Mexico).

Promoter: **Diamond Boxing Promotion**
(11-29-07)

Scott Mallon

Joachim Alcine KO 12 Alfonso Mosquera

Montreal, Quebec: After snatching the WBA super welterweight title from Travis Simms by unanimous decision in a snorer last July, Alcine's return home to Montreal's Bell Centre against unheralded Mosquera of Panama looked to be nothing more than a perfunctory first defense against a reasonably safe opponent. As it turned out, the fight was much tougher than expected. Thankfully, it was also much more entertaining than expected.

Mosquera, 153, had won four of his last five bouts, but with a decision over a spent Santiago Samaniego as his only victory of merit, there was little on paper to suggest he was capable of launching the sort of formidable challenge he did against Alcine. But a superbly conditioned Mosquera, 24, applied intense pressure from the first round, and, surprisingly, the 5'10" Alcine obliged his smaller opponent, digging in his heels and swapping hellacious leather at close quarters in a brawl that saw sustained, nose-to-nose action until the fight-ending kayo.

A technically accomplished boxer, it could be argued that the 30-year-old Alcine made it a much more difficult night than necessary against the determined Mosquera. Alcine, 152¼, dominated in the rare moments he elected to utilize his spearing jab and box from a distance, but he was all too ready to be drawn into the trenches and prove his mettle. Whether by Mosquera's design or by the titlist's flawed tactical judgment, the fight was mostly held in a phone booth, where the Panamanian traded near evenly with Alcine to keep the first three rounds close on the cards. For each rapid flurry Alcine snapped off, Mosquera responded with his own arsenal of short hooks, showing surprising speed and accuracy.

Any pretense of caution had been fully discarded by round four, with both fighters unloading salvos that carried the action for the full three minutes. This round saw the most heated action of the fight, and the point belonged to Mosquera.

Starting in the fifth, Alcine found an effective tactic in pushing off Mosquera with his left shoulder to open up enough distance for his combinations, and the Canadian won the next four rounds, although marginally. But a relentless Mosquera stormed back to take the ninth by backing Alcine to the ropes, scoring with overhand rights, and sneaking hooks past the beltholder's tightly held guard.

A more dominant Alcine kept the action in center ring late in the fight, damaging his right hand in the 11th while mounting a full-on assault that started to break down Mosquera. With Mosquera looking wobbly coming out for the 12th, Alcine unveiled some impressive power as his finishing instinct kicked into high gear.

"My corner told me, 'You got to take this guy out,'" Alcine said afterward, his corner's advice contradicting the official scorecards that all read 108-101 in the local fighter's favor. Still, it never hurts to get that knockout and please the fans, especially when the opponent appears to be fading.

Alcine had an exhausted Mosquera backing to the ropes when a hard right and left hook caught the challenger flush on the chin and sent him sprawling to the mat. Valiantly, Mosquera climbed back to his feet, intent on finishing the match, but a chopping right sent him to his knees for a second knockdown. Rising once more, Mosquera, 19-6 (7), had nothing in reserve and was promptly maneuvered to the ropes, where he took a stiff right hand from Alcine before referee Michael Griffin (Canada) stepped in and rescued the fighter. The end came at 2:17 of the final round.

"Sometimes, you get in front of the crowd, and you get excited, and you forget your strategy," the 30-0 (19) Alcine said of the 14,901 fans who were in attendance. "The last round, I didn't care about my hand, even though I hurt it in the 11th. I just didn't want the crowd to go home disappointed."

Alcine is tentatively looking make one more optional defense, against Frenchman Christophe Canclaux in March, prior to taking on his mandatory, Puerto Rico's Daniel Santos, by early-summer.

Promoter: **Groupe Yvon Michel (GYM)**

(12-7-07)

Paul Salgado

Zsolt Erdei W 12 Tito Mendoza

Dresden, Germany: Although Bernard Hopkins is the holder of THE RING light heavyweight championship, Erdei, 174, Hamburg, Germany, via Budapest, Hungary, claims to hold the linear light heavyweight title. Whatever the merits of either claimant, Erdei holds some degree of high ground with his willingness to compete frequently. On the other hand, the quality of the opponents he's faced recently has been dubious at best. In his ninth defense of the WBO title, which he won from Julio Gonzalez in 2004, Erdei was too clever for Mendoza, 173½, Santiago, Panama, even if the judges were divided over the decision at the Freiberger Arena.

At 6'3", the challenger enjoyed a five-inch reach advantage, but his biggest wins had come in lower weight classes against a faded Keith Holmes, Maselino Masoe, and Julio Garcia. While he tried to make use of his jab throughout the fight, it was a pawing punch, thrown without authority, and his combinations did not carry the same impact as Erdei's. The Hungarian slipped a lot of Mendoza's jabs and evaded many of his flurries, while his own combinations were far more accurate and effective and landed with greater power.

Erdei's skill was apparent in the early rounds as he boxed at a range that allowed him to tag the Panamanian repeatedly while rendering him able to evade Mendoza's more clumsy punches. The challenger hit back in round four when he managed to make his jab into an operative tool, and he also applied enough pressure to cause Erdei, 28-0 (17), some discomfort. But the Hungarian was quickly in control again, his superior ability more in evidence the longer the fight went on. He never had Mendoza, 36-8 (28), in serious trouble, but when the final bell rang it appeared that he was a comfortable winner on points.

PHOTO BY BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Erdei stuns Mendoza with a wicked left

Not so for Eugene Glenn (USA), who scored the fight, incredibly, 117-111 for Mendoza. But Manfred Kuechler (Germany) and Andre Van Grootenbruel (Belgium) both scored for Erdei, 116-112 and 117-111, respectively. THE RING scored 116-112 for Erdei.

Promoter: **Sauerland Promotions**
(11-24-07)
Brian Doogan

Edgar Sosa KO 4 Roberto Leyva

Veracruz, Mexico: It's one thing to take on an unthreatening opponent in your first defense after winning a title. It's another thing entirely to begin your reign with three straight "gimme" opponents. Since beating Brian Viloria in April '07 to claim the vacant WBC light flyweight title, Sosa had turned back non-contenders Luis Lazarte and Lorenzo Trejo before taking on former 105-pound beltholder "Mako" Leyva, loser of six of his previous nine (including three stoppage defeats), at Estadio Beto Avila. The result was an easy fourth-round TKO that ran Sosa's winning streak to 17.

The first round was cautiously fought, but by the second, Sosa, 108, Mexico City, Mexico, was in charge, applying pressure for which Leyva, 108, Ensenada, Mexico, had no answer. Both fighters were 28 years old, but one was an old 28 and the other fought like a younger man, and the more youthful Sosa dominated round three, scoring easily with hard right hands and shaking off the counterpunching efforts of Leyva, 24-7-1 (20). The mismatch ended suddenly at 2:32 of the fourth when Sosa, 30-5 (16), crushed the challenger with a left hook to the liver, prompting a stoppage from referee George Gibson (USA).

Sosa had not yet indicated as of press time whom he might be fighting in his fourth defense, but hopefully it will be someone more lively than any of the first three challengers.

Promoter: **Promociones Zanfer**
(11-24-07)

Arthur Abraham KO 5 Wayne Elcock

Basel, Switzerland: Kelly Pavlik, the world middleweight champion, may be the best puncher in the division, but Abraham, 159¾, Berlin, Germany, via Yerevan, Armenia, demonstrated again that he is a force to be reckoned with at 160 pounds when he stopped Elcock, 159, Birmingham, England, in five rounds at St. Jakob Halle in his first bout outside of Germany. It was Abraham's sixth defense of the IBF middleweight belt, which he won in a vacant title fight against Kingsley Ikeke in December 2005.

The 27-year-old Germany-based Armenian is eager to enjoy a breakthrough year in 2008. A unification bout with Germany's Felix Sturm, the WBA titleholder, could take place in July in Hamburg, but Pavlik, who was scheduled to face Jermain Taylor in a rematch in February at a catchweight of

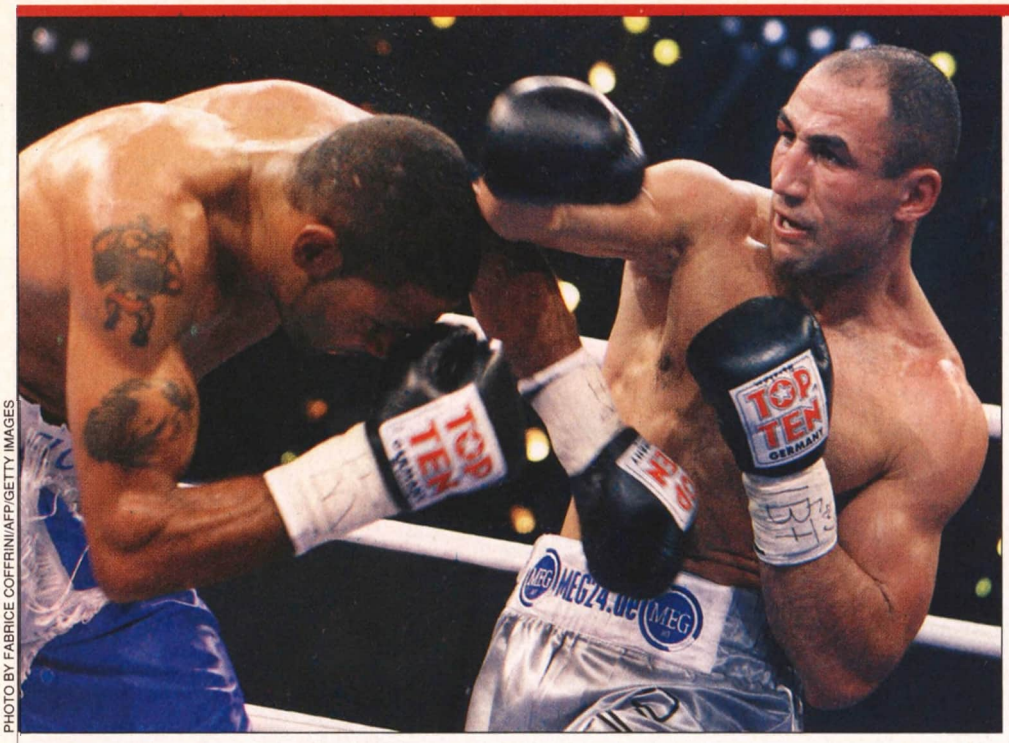

PHOTO BY FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

After disposing of Elcock, Abraham has Pavlick on his mind

166 pounds, is the man he ultimately has in his sights.

"I am negotiating with HBO for them to cover [Abraham's] next mandatory defense," said promoter Wilfried Sauerland. "We've already booked St. Pauli football stadium [in Hamburg] for July. We want Arthur to fight Felix Sturm. He would have two titles afterward, and that would further raise his profile in the United States. We are eyeing a unification fight in the U.S. against Pavlik, if he comes through against Taylor."

Elcock, 18-3 (8), who won the British title against Howard Eastman in September, competed well when he was able to use his jab and maintain the distance from Abraham, which he managed to do in the opening round. But the powerful Armenian landed a right hand high on Elcock's head in the second that put the 33-year-old challenger on the floor. He got up quickly and recovered well, getting back to his boxing to take the third round. A clash of heads in the fourth brought an ugly swelling over Abraham's right eye.

"This really annoyed me," admitted Abraham, 25-0 (20). "I didn't want my eye to get shut so I concentrated 100 percent on going for the finish."

Abraham landed a right hand to the chin in the fifth round, the punch landing with such force that Elcock's upper body was propelled between the ropes. American referee Wayne Kelly correctly ruled a knockdown, for it was only the ropes that kept the Briton on his feet. A ruthless finisher, Abraham moved in and crashed a left hook off of Elcock's jaw that took everything out of the challenger, who collapsed into the arms of Kelly, who waved it over at the 1:58 mark.

"My coach [Ulli Wegner] urged me to be a bit more active [at the end of the fourth round]," Abraham said. "That's what I did [in the fifth], and shortly afterward the fight was over. My goal is to become undisputed champion and I will work hard to accomplish this. Right now my favorite opponent is Pavlik, but I also want to take care of business with Sturm. I want to unify the titles."

Promoter: **Sauerland Promotions**

(12-8-07)

Brian Doogan

John Duddy W 10 Howard Eastman

Belfast, Northern Ireland: It might have been Eastman's 37th birthday on fight night, but Duddy was the one celebrating at the end of a rousing 10-rounder that saw the unbeaten Irishman take a hard-earned, but narrow, decision and stay on course for a projected tilt at Kelly Pavlik's world middleweight title sometime in 2008. Duddy, 159¼, Derry, Northern Ireland, passed his toughest test yet against the crafty, still dangerous veteran, who ridiculed prefight predictions that he was only there for a decent payday. At times, Eastman, 160, London, England, via New Amsterdam, Guyana, looked capable of halting Duddy's onward march, but ultimately the Irishman's fighting spirit proved unquenchable.

A capacity crowd of 6,000, roaring on their hero with a roof-raising volume not heard at the atmospheric King's Hall since the glory days of Barry McGuigan and Dave "Boy" McAuley in the 1980s and early-'90s, had to endure a spell of anxiety as Eastman, a two-time title challenger, raked his over-eager opponent with sharp jabs, hooks, and uppercuts to take an early lead. Duddy, 23-0 (17), well advised by veteran American trainer Don Turner, began to gain control when he stood his distance and scored with impressive double jabs and followup two-fisted flurries. A cut over his right eye picked up in the third round didn't worry the Irishman unduly, and he never flinched from going head-to-head with Eastman in exciting exchanges.

The persistence and higher workrate of Duddy, 28, who intends to continue bi-locating between Ireland and New York, where he fights under the Irish Ropes banner of the Irish-born McLoughlin brothers, Eddie and Tony, obviously impressed Belfast referee Sean Russell, the sole arbiter, who scored it 96-94. THE RING had it a shade closer at 96-95.

"It was a great learning experience and I thoroughly enjoyed the fight," Duddy reflected. "I think I showed improvement, the way I moved my head more, and I was able to take his punches quite comfortably, not that taking

punches to the head is ever comfortable."

Eastman, 42-6 (35), felt he had been done an injustice, observing, "Mr. Duddy fought a good, intelligent fight, but he got the decision in his home yard. I just feel gutted." On his conqueror's much-hyped title prospects, he commented, "I know a lot of people would like to see him go all the way, and me too, but he has to be careful. He will get hurt if he gets pushed too quickly."

Promoter: **Brian Peters**
(8-12-07)
Patrick Myler

Amir Khan KO 1 Graham Earl

Bolton, England: With Joe Calzaghe, Ricky Hatton, and David Haye spearheading the resurgence of British boxing, Khan, 134½, Bolton, England, emphasized his credentials to carry on his compatriots' great work by blowing away former British lightweight titleholder Earl, 134¼, Luton, England, at the Bolton Arena. Competing on his 21st birthday, it was Khan's second defense of the Commonwealth lightweight title.

Britain's Olympic silver medalist from the 2004 Games in Athens has betrayed no residual effect of the heavy flooring he sustained in his bout with Scotland's Willie Limond in July, when he won the title. Limond floored him in the sixth round and took him to the brink of defeat. To Khan's credit, he got back up and shook off the cobwebs quickly, inflicting enough damage over the next two rounds to force a stoppage of Limond after eight. He needed to respond emphatically, which he did against Scott Lawton in October, stopping the 31-year-old in the fourth round. Lawton was too outgunned himself to expose any hint of Khan being gun-shy, and the same could be said of the 29-year-old Earl, who had been predominantly on the wrong end of a slugfest with Australian Michael Katsidis before being stopped in the fifth round last February. The "Earl Of Luton" had been inactive since, and the suspicion was that he might be a seriously depleted performer when he stepped in the ring with Khan.

But in a spiteful build-up, he had talked a good fight. "This fight's been brewing for a while and now he's fighting the best man in Britain. I've been confident for a long time that I've got what it takes to beat him," said Earl, 25-3 (12). "This fight is too early for him, I believe, so we'll see if he is ready. I'm going to give him a war. I will be professional and won't let my heart rule my head, but you don't get paid for overtime in boxing and I'm going to make sure that the fight doesn't go the 12 rounds."

It was much shorter, of course, but this was due to Khan, whose explosive power has elevated him to being one of the most exciting prospects in world boxing. "He is definitely one of the bright young stars on the horizon," acknowledged Mark Taffet, HBO's senior vice president for sports operations and pay-per-view. "My colleague Kery Davis [senior vice president of sports programming] has watched Amir a number of times, and I hear Kerry speaking extremely highly of him. I know he believes he has the potential to be one of the true stars of the sport."

Khan will face greater challenges, but Earl was a step up for the young Bolton boxer. From the opening bell, Khan used his five-inch height advantage to good effect, backing up his more experienced opponent until he hurt him with a left hook and put him down with a hard and fast left-right combination to the chin. Earl was clearly disoriented. At the completion of British referee Howard Foster's mandatory eight-count, he was allowed to continue, but very quickly he was overwhelmed. Khan, 15-0 (12), rattled off another left-right combination and a battery of blows before the referee was forced to intervene at the 1:12 mark with Earl pinned on the ropes.

"It was a bit of a statement from the birthday boy. He did the job in phenomenal style," said promoter Frank Warren. "I don't think anybody anticipated that ending to the fight. That was something else. It reminded me of looking at a young Sugar Ray Leonard. He fought a guy ranked the best in the country with a wealth of experience. And Amir just didn't let him get into it. It was a cracking left hook he caught him with, and the finishing power, the hand speed, it is all coming together. The maturity is getting there, and he's getting stronger. He's got a bit of a way to go, but I believe he's going to be the goods, I really do."

Promoter: **Sports Network**
(12-8-07)
Brian Doogan ■

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Earl did not test Khan as he had predicted

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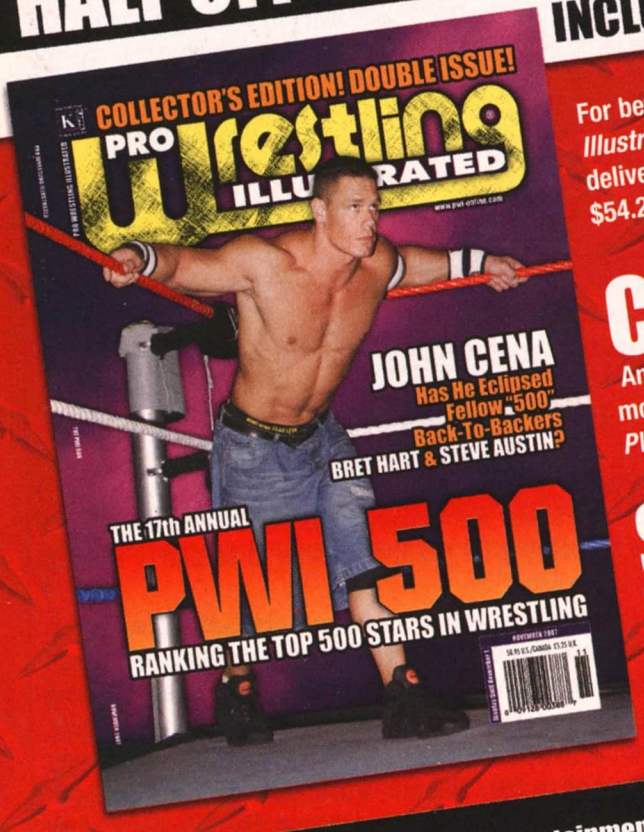

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(Continued from Page 26)

Stevenson's life becoming increasingly troubled. From the outset, Stevenson showed promise as an amateur fighter, but a life outside the gym marred by gang violence and run-ins with the law ultimately saw him land in jail for a two-year stint. By his own admission, the now 30-year-old Stevenson said he ran with a bad element, but it is a time he seems uncomfortable talking about, and which he emphatically states is far behind him.

These days, Stevenson lives a quiet life in the Montreal suburb of Longueuil and commits himself full-time to boxing, running in the mornings before heading to the gym to train each day.

"He is very shy guy," said Michel. "It's only in the ring that he's extroverted, but outside, he speaks in a low tone. He's confident when he talks about his career, but really, he's content to do the job in the ring."

It was soon after his incarceration that Stevenson vowed not to squander his talent and pledged himself wholeheartedly to boxing. Although he had a short amateur career, he amassed an impressive 36-5 record, with 30 of his wins coming via knockout. With the exception of an early decision loss that was avenged by a first-round knockout, Stevenson's other setbacks were decision defeats at the international level, including Cuban Emilio Correa and Australian Jarrod Fletcher in the final match of the '06 Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

But it is two scorching fights for the Canadian National title in '03 and '04 against current super middleweight sensation and now pro stablemate Jean Pascal that are most remembered from Stevenson's amateur days. The more experienced Pascal never lost an amateur fight in Canada, winning both times, but Stevenson entrenched himself as one the country's hottest emerging talents.

"It was very close with Pascal. They went at it in wars. I would say that in all of Canada, Stevenson was probably Jean's stiffest test," said Russ Anber, who hosts the boxing show *In This Corner* on Canada's sports network TSN, and who trained Stevenson as an amateur for two years. "Stevenson had a good amateur career, but he didn't have an extensive career. When he fought Jean the first time, he only had around 10 or 11 fights."

Once Pascal turned pro, Stevenson quickly succeeded him as national champion en route to becoming the number-one ranked fighter in his weight class in North America.

It was the loss to Jarrod at the Commonwealth games—in what Stevenson believes was a hometown decision after dropping the Australian in the second round—that finally soured him on the amateurs. Stevenson's dream from the moment he began boxing always was to turn pro and win a world title. Already 28 years old, he had no time for the disappointment of winning silver and made the leap.

He immediately sought out GYM and within months was on a rampage that saw him annihilate his first five opponents in two rounds or less. To date, his knockouts have been breathtaking as much for their variety as they were for their brutality: a left uppercut finished Bonnie Joe McGee (KO 2), a right hook to the ribs crumbled Eduardo Calderon (KO 1), while a left hook to the body was the finisher against Marcus Thomas (KO 1).

For his last fight, against David Whittom, Stevenson began working with Howard Grant, trainer of WBA super welterweight titlist Joachin Alcine. The fighter specifically sought out Grant, who has a reputation as a tough disciplinarian in the gym, after his original trainer, Daniel Trepanier, relocated to take an executive position with the Canadian Boxing Association. Grant expressed little concern about Stevenson's age because the fighter has kept himself exceptionally fit and has suffered little physical wear and tear in the ring. The focus right now, said Grant, is on technical improvement and building ring experience.

"The thing I saw with Adonis was that he wasn't sitting down on his punches. He was slapping a lot, but he has sheer raw power," Grant said. "He still has a lot has to polish up on, but he's talented, and if he keeps concentrating on the fundamentals, he could be very scary in the division."

Questions regarding Stevenson's stamina were most recently answered after he won a 10-round decision over a durable Whittom for the Canadian super middleweight title. Most expected a short night, but Stevenson surprised onlookers by patiently boxing Whittom behind a sharp jab, while showing some deft head movement—hardly characteristics of a "one-dimensional knockout artist."

The world-class sparring Stevenson receives in the gym with fighters like Alcine and Pascal serves to boost his confidence and refine his skills, according to Grant, who has mapped out ambitious plans for 2008.

"I expect him to be in the top 15," the trainer said. "You don't need to baby-sit this guy, you have to test him out to see how good he is. We're ready right now to fight the guy Lucien Bute knocked out for the title, Alejandro Berrio. Not to sound overconfident, but I really believe this kid could knock a lot of guys out."

Down the road, Stevenson says he would like to help troubled youths with problems similar to those he had years ago. But, right now, his only focus is boxing, and his goals are clear.

"Making 168 is easy for me, because I train hard, and I can stay there a long time," said Stevenson. "I want to win a world title at super middleweight and light heavyweight. But I would like to win a title at 190 pounds too."

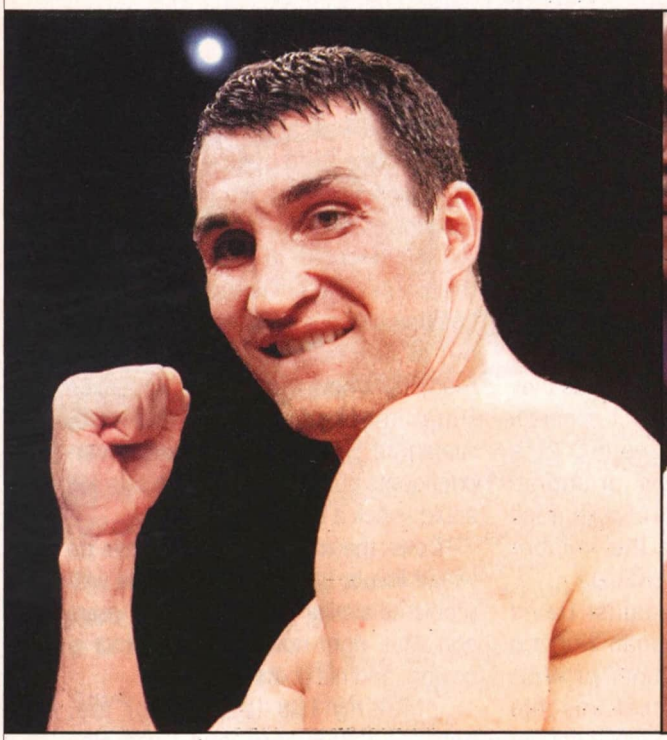
It would seem a fitting ambition, given that Stevenson has chooses to be referred to as "Superman." Superman ... Adonis. Hey, if Stevenson is one day good enough to hold belts in three separate weight classes, he can call himself whatever he wants. ■

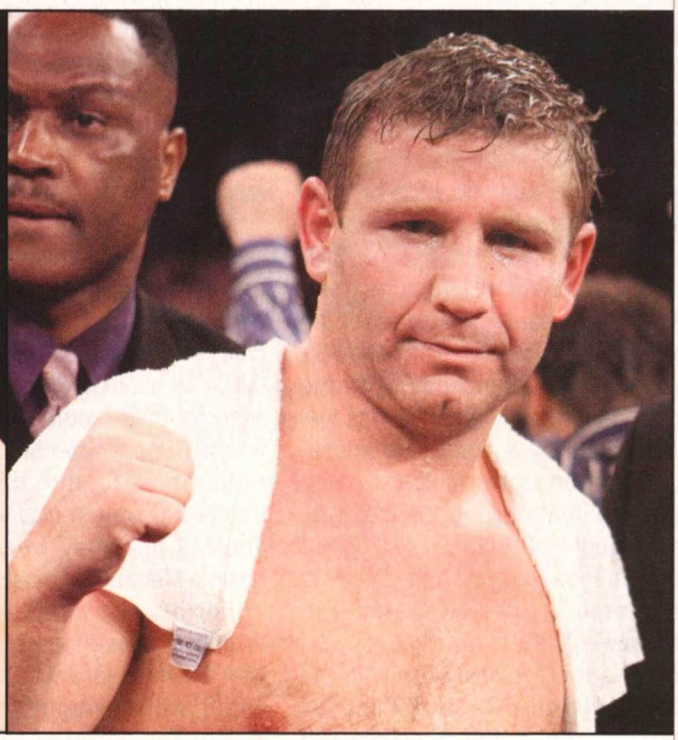
Heavyweight Bout

Wladimir Klitschko

Main Event 12 Rounds

Sultan Ibragimov





There are a couple ways to look at the Wladimir Klitschko-Sultan Ibragimov fight, which is scheduled for February 23 in Madison Square Garden. The first way is as a heavyweight title unification bout, and indeed, that's how the promoters are selling it. Klitschko is the IBF titleholder as a result of his odd win over Sam Peter two years ago, while Ibragimov holds the WBO belt he won by beating Shannon Briggs in June 2007. Again, that's one way to look at it.

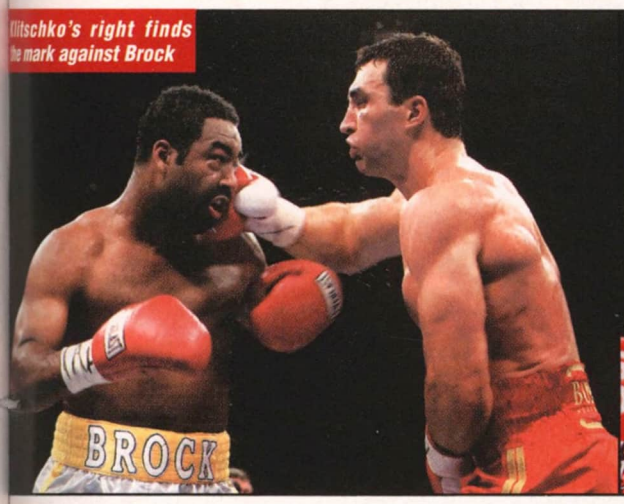
And then there's the right way: as a fight between two top-10 heavyweight contenders, one of whom happens to be viewed pretty universally as the top heavyweight in the business. Klitschko is kind of a champion in waiting, if you will (don't let that phrase get around; some alphabet bandits will make a title out of it and charge sanctioning fees). Everyone knows he's the best heavyweight in the world, but it can't be official—as in "world heavyweight champion" —until he beats the number-two guy. And Ibragimov isn't him; Peter is.

As far as heavyweight fights go, however, this one isn't bad. Anytime two top-10 heavyweights get together, anything can happen. Both guys can hit and both guys know how to fight, so, alphabet belts or not, it's an interesting and important fight that will go some way toward further clarifying things in the heavyweight division, i.e., further cementing Klitschko's status or introducing a new top dog. Progress is a good thing.

Wladimir Klitschko

Sultan Ibragimov

Record and World Rating



Klitschko's right finds the mark against Brock

Ibragimov lays the leather on Briggs

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Is 49-3 with 44 knockouts ... Turned pro in November 1996 following a stellar amateur career, during which he went a reported 134-6 ... Representing Ukraine, won the gold medal in the super heavyweight division at the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta ... Was undefeated in 24 fights before suffering first knockout loss in 1998 ... Won 16 in a row before two more upset kayo losses, in 2003 and '04, severely damaged his reputation ... Won the IBF heavyweight title in September '05 and has made four defenses ... Ranked number one at heavyweight by THE RING.

Is 22-0-1 with 17 knockouts ... Had a decorated amateur career, winning silver and bronze medals at the European and World Amateur Championships in 2000 and 2001, respectively ... Representing Russia at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, gained the silver medal after losing on points to Cuban legend Felix Savon in the heavyweight final ... Turned pro in May 2002 in the United States and scored four first-round knockouts in his first four bouts ... Faced first top-20 contender in '05 ... Ranked number six at heavyweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment

Klitschko stuns Byrd with a right to the temple

Ibragimov's gets past Austin's guard

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Is 31 years old ... An imposing physical specimen, standing 6'6½" with an 81-inch reach ... Typically fights at between 243 and 245 pounds ... Has knockout power in either hand and is reasonably light on his feet for his size ... Hand speed ordinary ... Should be in his physical prime, or maybe just a hair past it ... Biggest liabilities are chin, stamina, and composure, each of which is undependable.

Is 32 years old ... Stands 6'2" with a 75-inch reach ... Usually fights at about 220 pounds ... Faster than average hand speed for a heavyweight and solid knockout power in either fist, but particularly the left ... Fairly mobile and can move and box when pressed ... Chin questionable ... Has shown good stamina and is usually well conditioned.

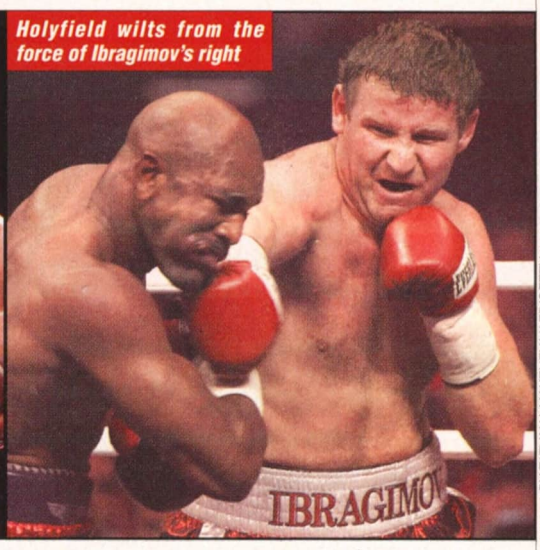
Wladimir Klitschko

Sultan Ibragimov

Best Weapons

Byrd finds Klitschko's reach a problem

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES



Holyfield wilts from the force of Ibragimov's right

PHOTO BY TATYANA MAKEYEVA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Long, punishing jab can control a fight when nothing else is working ... Favored powerpunch is right cross, which can end fight at any moment ... Left hook lethal as well, but not thrown as often as the right ... Knows how to "fight tall" and keep opponent on the outside ... Technically very sound for a big man.

Stiff, straight left hand is the punch of choice ... Right hook is effective also ... Throws efficient combinations ... Is a threat to explode with series of powerpunches at any time ... Very composed and relaxed.

Previous Fight

Pummeled one-time conqueror Lamon Brewster until Brewster's corner stopped it after six completely one-sided rounds on July 7, 2007 in Cologne, Germany ... Hammered Brewster with jabs from the first round and started mixing in booming right crosses just before the end ... Brewster rumored to have fought virtually blind in one eye, the result of an injury he suffered against Sergei Liakhovich and never had treated.

Won a lopsided decision over faded former champion Evander Holyfield on October 13, 2007, in Moscow by scores of 118-110 and 117-111 (twice) ... Outboxed Holyfield from the start, using smart movement and a stinging right jab to keep him off-balance ... Never allowed Holyfield to set himself to punch ... Hurt Holyfield at least once with bodyshots, but was stunned by a right in the final round.

Quality of Opposition

Recovered from disastrous losses to Brewster (KO by 5), Corrie Sanders (KO by 2), and Ross Puritty (KO by 11) to become by far the most experienced heavyweight in the top-10 ... Wins over Chris Byrd (KO 7, W 12), Samuel Peter (W 12), Calvin Brock (KO 7), Jameel McCline (KO 11), and Brewster (KO 6) evidence of willingness to face dangerous opponents.

Has faced no accomplished, higher-quality heavyweights. Most experienced foes were Holyfield (W 10), Shannon Briggs (W 12), Ray Austin (D 12), and Lance Whitaker (KO 7). Next best were lower rung Zuri Lawrence (KO 11) and Javier Mora (KO 1). Hs faced no one near Klitschko's level.

Defense

Jab, reach, and height responsible for keeping opponents too far outside to land ... Does not hesitate to clinch on the inside when an opponent can get there ... Can be hit when backed up and does not respond well ... Chin will always be a liability.

Uses movement and slightly unorthodox style to avoid punches ... Hands are always held low, presumably to draw lead so he can counter ... Uses judicious movement to stay outside opponent's reach ... Knows how to slow the pace of a fight to his speed.

Wladimir Klitschko

Sultan Ibragimov

Style

Klitschko disposes of Austin in two

Relies on pole-ax jab to set up right hands from outside ... Very patient, methodical ... Willing to soften opponent with jabs for as long as it takes before he steps in with powerpunches ... A profoundly powerful offensive fighter ... Still appears unusually anxious and tense when pressed or tagged.

Ibragimov zeroes in on Whitaker

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Can box or punch, depending on the style of the opponent ... Very relaxed, composed southpaw ... Mixes punches up very well and knows how to spot openings ... Is not hard to find and leaves himself open while on offense.

The Questions

Will he unravel if Ibragimov is able to hit and hurt him? How will he handle Ibragimov's southpaw stance? What happens if Ibragimov is able to get inside, past Klitschko's jab? If the fight goes into the later rounds, will he have the mental strength and endurance to see it through?

How will he overcome Klitschko's enormous height and reach advantages? Can he handle Klitschko's power? In his first very big fight against a world-class heavyweight, will he freeze? How will he react to what is expected to be a large and hostile crowd?

The Outcome

Klitschko's jab will control the flow of a slow, tactical fight that is punctuated by occasional Ibragimov successes when he is able to jump in and bang Klitschko with hard shots. A flash knockdown or two isn't out of the question, but Klitschko is too big and good and Ibragimov too small and accustomed to coming in second against the top players. He will again here. Klitschko by unanimous decision or late-kayo.

May 1950

COVER STORY: "Joey Maxim World's Light Heavyweight King" is the headline accompanying Stanley Weston's illustration of the new 175-pound champion, who had recently stopped Freddie Mills in England to win the title. The article inside, "Eyes Vacant Throne," is about Maxim's desire to move up to heavyweight and capture the title THE RING had considered vacant since Joe Louis retired the previous year.

"Usually a man newly crowned as a world leader in any division is quite content to start outlining the defense of his title," wrote Daniel M. Daniel. "But it is the peculiar destiny of the light heavyweight champions to begin planning the acquisition of the heavyweight laurels. That is precisely what Maxim started to do 24 hours after he knocked out Mills."

Maxim got his chance the following year when he challenged Ezzard Charles, who had by then gained universal recognition as world champion with his victory over the comebacking Louis. However, the tough but light-punching Maxim lost a unanimous 15-round decision and then returned to the light heavyweight class, where he tallied two more defenses before losing the title to Archie Moore.

"In Defense Of Boxing" by Nat Fleischer is exactly that—the RING editor and founder's response to the cries to outlaw the sport following the death of middleweight Laverne Roach. Roach died after suffering a 10th-round knockout loss to Georgie Small at Madison Square Garden.

Although Fleischer admitted that a previous "shellacking" from Marcel Cerdan had probably "softened" Roach, most of the article was an attempt to rationalize what had happened and divert attention elsewhere.

"These deaths and accidents just happen, as do accidents and fatalities in everyday life," wrote Fleischer. "Those who are fighting boxing would do well to turn their attention to such mishaps as deaths on the highway, reckless driving that kills thousands annually, and cancer and heart disease."

World Champions

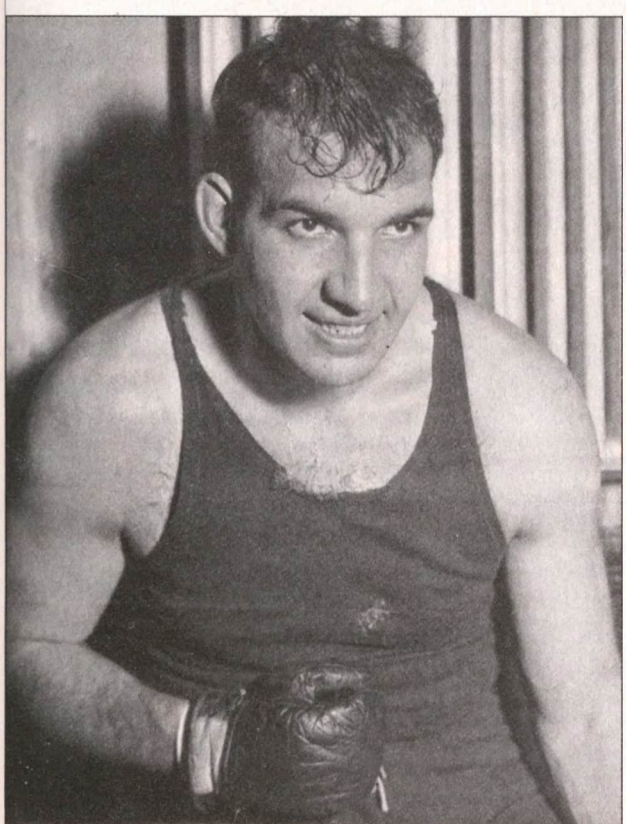
(for the period ended March 15, 1950)
Heavyweight: vacant
Light Heavyweight: Joey Maxim
Middleweight: Jake LaMotta
Welterweight: Ray Robinson
Lightweight: Ike Williams
Featherweight: Willie Pep
Bantamweight: Manuel Ortiz
Flyweight: Rinty Monaghan

Small is sworn in during commissions hearing into Roach's death

"Newark, A Jinx Town" by Jersey Jones details the New Jersey city's history of unexpected results and unhappy consequences, especially for heavyweights. Primo Carnera's run up to the heavyweight title was almost derailed when he was outpointed by Stanley Poreda in Newark, and Joe Baski had to cancel two lucrative matches when he suffered serious facial injuries winning a couple of so-called tune-ups there. Then there was Willie Meehan, who had given heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey fits before Dempsey won the title. Meehan's manager, Billy Gibson, brought him to the East Coast, figuring he could get "Fat Willie" a couple of wins and then a title shot. But Charley Weinert outclassed him so badly in Newark, Meehan's hopes of a title shot at Dempsey were wrecked.

"From Boxer To Ace Business Executive" is Ted Carroll's interview with Ray Impellitiere, a New York heavyweight who had retired in 1936 after a brief but memorable career that saw him fight such notables as Primo Carnera, Tommy Loughran, and Bob Pastor. The 6'7", 250-pound Impellitiere had only managed to win nine of his 16 pro bouts, but claimed that his boxing career had helped him in his business enterprises, including Knickerbocker Motors, a Ford agency in downtown New York.

"It has made possible what success I've had so far," said Impellitiere. "You'd be surprised how far a boxer's reputation travels. Even today, I can't go anywhere without running across people who tell me they've either seen, heard, or read about me."



Impellitiere as he looked in his fighting days

"Jabs From St. Louis And Vicinity" focuses on welterweight champion Sugar Ray Robinson's taxing 10-round decision over Frenchman Jean Walczak in a non-title bout that attracted 5,889 fans.

"It was fairly evident by his clowning antics in the first three rounds that Robinson was under the impression he was in for an easy evening," wrote Bus Burke. "But, by the end of the third, he began to realize he was really in a battle with a durable and aggressive opponent."

"Under Southern Skies" features Tom Ephrem's report of featherweight champion Willie Pep's 10-round decision over Jimmy Warren in a non-title bout in Miami. Ephrem was clearly unimpressed by what he witnessed.

"Pep was pepless for once and didn't show much to the crowd of around 4,000. Warren was fined $250 for his poor showing and Pep $500. Fans would like to know why would the boxing commission okay a match between one excellent man against a mediocre opponent."

Pep and foe were both fined

"Boxing In Havana" bemoans the lack of action caused by a strike. "Cuba's boxing fans are waiting for our Managers, Boxers, and Seconds Association to end their queer strike against the boxing commission, which has kept all the clubs idle," wrote local correspondent Dr. Jorge A. Viettes. "It all began when a well-known circus rented the Havana Sports Palace during December and part of January. The association started the strike and all our best fighters departed for other shores." ■

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Human Growth Hormone: Valuable or Valueless

Prior to Jameel McCline's October 2007 Madison Square Garden bout against Samuel Peter, reports surfaced that in 2005 and 2006 McCline had received numerous banned substances, including human growth hormone (HGH) and anabolic steroids from Infinity Longevity of Boca Raton, Florida. The heavyweight had never tested positive for prohibited substances, nor did he test positive after the Peter fight. However, the drug screens did not include a test for HGH as there remains limited ways to determine if someone is using the substance.

McCline is not the only fighter linked to growth hormone.

Sports Illustrated reporters Luis Fernando Ilosa and Jon Wertheim reported on February 28, 2007, that Evander Holyfield allegedly received steroids and HGH in 2004 from a private Georgia medical office raided last year. The former heavyweight champion released a statement via his promoter, Main Events, that he never used steroids, but no comment was made regarding HGH.

HGH infiltrated professional sports over 10 years ago. Since then it has become a dirty little secret that few wish to discuss. Although countless athletes inject it daily, conflicting studies raise issues regarding its value. But is it useful in boxing and should it even be recommended to fighters are more relevant questions.

Since the 1950s, human growth hormone injections were solely given to children with stunted stature. A1990 article in the *New England Journal Of Medicine* reported that men taking a six-month course of HGH decreased body fat by 14.4 percent and increased lean muscle by 8.8 percent. HGH was then touted as a miracle drug and fountain of youth. Anti-aging clinics praising the substance sprung up all over the United States.

Growth hormone is considered a naturally occurring anabolic agent (muscle building). It is produced by the pituitary, a

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Days before his near upset of Samuel Peter in October, published reports said that Jameel McCline received Human Growth Hormone in 2005 and 2006. There have been no studies performed to determine what impact HGH has on the performance of elite athletes.

tiny gland the size of a pea that sits at the base of the brain. Although the hormone is produced throughout our lives, there is considerable increased production when we are young. Until genetic engineering, it was obtained from cadavers, but is now synthetically made in unlimited quantities.

It remains illegal without a valid prescription. In fact, *Rocky* star and *Contender* creator Sylvester Stallone was recently prosecuted for importing large amounts of HGH into Australia.

Treating children involves daily injections, but the benefits are seen within months and the risks for children are low. In adults with a severe growth hormone deficiency, HGH can improve strength, endurance, and bone density. Individuals with conditions such as AIDS, severe burns, or severe calorie restriction can benefit from the hormone.

Side effects of HGH include acromegaly or gigantism.

Remember "Jaws" in the James Bond flick *The Spy Who Loved Me?* In acromegaly, the jaw enlarges as do the spaces between the teeth. The heart, liver, and kidneys will also undergo excessive growth that can lead to an irregular heart beat or cardiomyopathy, a dangerous cardiac disorder where the heart muscle becomes inflamed. When coming in contact with cancer cells, HGH is like gasoline thrown on a fire. Other serious medical conditions include fluid retention, intracranial hypertension (increased pressure within the brain), pancreatitis, and diabetes from inhibiting insulin production.

Studies have yielded conflicting results regarding its efficacy in athletes.

A 2004 study by Deus demonstrated that HGH helped bodybuilders lose weight and maintain lean muscle mass. Other studies have not agreed. Frequently quoted research by Henrik et al. in 2002 indicated that HGH is not effective in increasing muscle strength or muscle mass. This was confirmed by a 2007 Australian study using *recreational* athletes. HGH increased their body mass due to fluid retention, but muscle mass remained the same. However, when combined with testosterone, there was an increase in muscle mass and sprint power demonstrating a synergistic effect between HGH and anabolic steroids.

No study has directly evaluated the use of this substance on *elite* athletes. The absence of definitive research has done nothing to impede the HGH's use. Athletes continue to rely on it, believing it has the power to boost performance, endurance, reduce body fat, and even increase the number of muscle cells in the body. Athletes may spend somewhere in the neighborhood of $2,000-3,000 a month on HGH.

Unfortunately, there have been little advances in HGH detection. It has been banned by the International Olympic Committee since 1998; nevertheless athletes know there is little chance of their being caught unless they have the substance on their person. Many that are caught red-handed falsely claim they took the drug to help recover from injury. This is not an approved use for HGH.

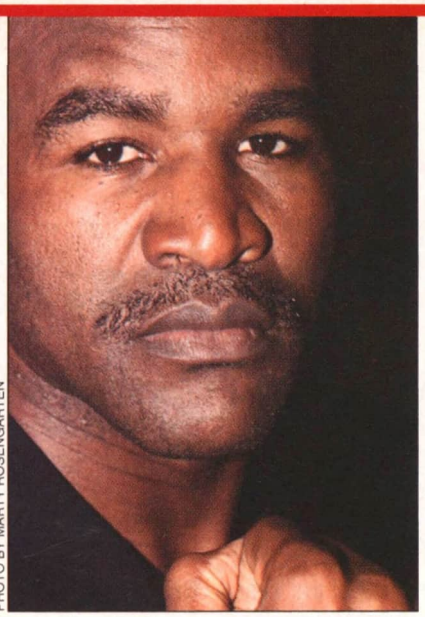


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Evander Holyfield's name was among the list of athletes who allegedly received steroids and HGH from private Georgia medical office. The former champion denies ever having used steroids, but did not comment on the growth hormone.

There is no 100 percent accurate test for HGH, as the amount secreted in the body fluctuates from hour-to-hour, and it is rapidly broken down. Larry Bowers, the chief scientist for the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency notes that the best test available for detection is 48-72 hours from use. This is impractical during competition, as most athletes would have stopped injecting days before. This is in comparison to anabolic steroids, which can remain in the blood or urine for months.

Comprehensive drug panels including anabolic steroids and masking agents (that prevent their detection) can cost $200 to $300. The HGH test costs about $40, and while that may not seem like much, HGH tests would have to be conducted repeatedly to catch the culprits. Dr. Bowers believes that it may be at least 10 years until there is a urine test for the substance.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) will continue to ban HGH it because they ban anything that could be considered performance-enhancing, irrespective of proof. WADA notes that the use of any substance "based on the mistaken belief they enhance performance is clearly contradictory to the spirit of sport." So, it doesn't matter if the drug is giving an athlete an unfair advantage. If they believe it is, then it is cheating.

What is of particular interest to boxing is that head trauma, or punches to the head could result in damage to the pituitary gland. In addition to growth hormone, the pituitary secretes many other hormones that influence many bodily functions, including metabolism, the thyroid gland, male and female sex hormones, blood pressure, breast milk production, and water regulation.

Therefore, some studies theorize that growth hormone deficiency develops following head trauma. *Could boxers be deficient?* If so, then it is conceivable that hormone replacement via HGH could help a boxer perform up to his abilities. Although growth hormone levels decline as we age, it is unknown whether or not a boxer's levels diminish out of proportion to individuals not subject to head trauma.

It is unknown how prevalent HGH use is among boxers; for most, the cost is prohibitive. But its value to a fighter is probably negligible, and regardless of how long it takes to appear on a drug screen, it remains cheating, illegal, and risky. ■

By Jim Bagg

From Bagg To Worse, 2007 Edition

Hooray for Kelly Pavlik, Floyd Mayweather, Joe Calzaghe, Wladimir Klitschko, and everyone else who had a wonderfully successful 2007. *Whoopity-doo-da.*

All right, now that the boring bullcrap is out of the way, let's get on to the fun stuff: ripping on the people who sucked the most in '07. The Baggdaddy first introduced the Baggie Awards in 2002, when he named Kirk Johnson the Loser of the Year, Bernard Hopkins the Imbecile of the Year, Floyd Mayweather Sr. the Egomaniac of the Year, and so forth. Well, five years later, losers, imbeciles, and egomaniacs still abound in boxing, so it's time to bust out the Baggies once again.

Five years ago, the Baggmeister wrote that he was doling out "the coveted golden hunk of crap in a spit bucket" to the, *ahem*, winners. Well, the budget has decreased a bit since then, so this year, there's no golden anything. Instead, Baggie recipients will take home a urine cup (used and signed by James Toney), wrapped in tin foil for that shiny-award effect. On to the 2007 Baggies:

Loser of the Year: As a great physical talent who fell short in most of his biggest fights, **Shannon Briggs** will definitely be a candidate for a Lifetime Achievement Baggie when all is said and done. But for now, he'll have to settle for being 2007's Loser of the Year. He was truly blessed in 2006, when he fought like a loser against Sergei Liakhovich but somehow turned out to be less of a loser than his opponent, and ended up with his arm raised in victory. So how did he capitalize on his good fortune of becoming a heavyweight beltholder? By making

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Briggs didn't have the stomach for Ibragimov

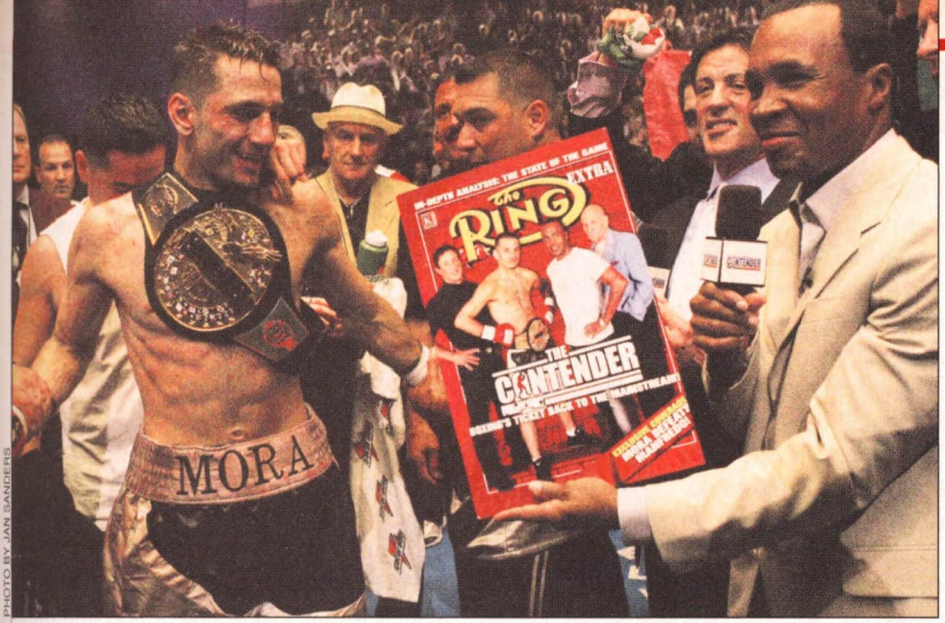


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Mora admires his first and probably last RING cover

absolutely no effort whatsoever in his first defense, against the decidedly average Sultan Ibragimov. Briggs had a chance to make millions for future fights, but instead he became a non-factor in the heavyweight division once again. It's often been said (by exasperated trainers) that you have to throw punches to win. After 12 rounds of refusing to throw punches, Briggs is clearly this past year's biggest loser.

Imbecile of the Year: With all due respect to the imbecility of Antonio Margarito, who took less money to lose to Paul Williams than he would have gotten to fight Miguel Cotto—all because he didn't want to forfeit his precious WBO belt—you just can't deny **Sergio Mora** this award. Who's ever heard of a guy who doesn't deserve a championship fight turning it down because he doesn't care for the city in which it's taking place? All this so he could be inactive for 14 months, then fight to a draw against Elvin Ayala. Well played, Sergio. For a guy who spent most of *The Contender* series with his head buried in philosophy books, Mora doesn't strike the Baggdriver as being all that smart.

Egomaniac of the Year: Let's keep this award in the family and give it to pound-for-pound king **Floyd Mayweather**, who proudly declares himself the "greatest of all-time," but always finds a reason not to fight the guys who have a shot at beating him. If only he could find a reason to never again step into the recording studio and freestyle rap.

Wuss of the Year: You could call **Andre Dirrell** the Imbecile of the Year for blowing his first and possibly last shot on HBO by running for all 10 rounds against Curtis Stevens. The suits at HBO, after all, are the most important people in this business to impress if you want to ever make real money. But the Baggee-Doodle-Dandy thinks Dirrell is more wuss than imbecile; he just doesn't have a fighter's heart. When you put those gloves on, you're saying, "I'm willing to get hit the face a time or two in order to do my job." Which is why this particular wuss ought to think long and hard heading into '08 about whether putting the gloves on is what he really wants to be doing with his life.

Incompetent Referee of the Year: We had quite a bumper crop to choose from in '07, with Joe Cortez getting in the way in both Mayweather-Hatton and Hatton-Castillo and Jay Nady recording a blown call for the ages in Marquez-Barrera. But they're both getting bailed out by the Babe Ruth of lousy refs, **Terry O'Connor**, who called a halt in the Joe Calzaghe-Peter Manfredo world championship fight before either fighter had so much as stumbled. Sure, Manfredo was in a spot of trouble. But before Calzaghe was going to be declared the winner, we would've liked to have seen a teeter out of Manfredo. Or maybe a wobble. A buckle. A sway. Something. What we got was Manfredo under fire, ducking and covering up, and when he popped out of his

PHOTO BY CHRIS YOUNG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Referee Terry O'Connor apparently sees something nobody else did

shell to plot his next move, he saw O'Connor's waving arms. Heaven forbid the 35,000 paying fans at Millennium Stadium should actually get to see a fight.

Blind Judge of the Year: All three of the judges in the Joel Casamayor-Jose Santa Cruz travesty deserve to have their eyes poked out with Billy Graham's crooked finger, but **Ron McNair**, one of the two officials who scored it 114-113 for Casamayor, earns the Baggie because he had a second nearly inexplicable scorecard in '07. In the Yuri Foreman-Anthony Thompson bout in June, a fight that was close but that most people felt should have gone to Thompson, McNair had it 97-93 for Foreman. One bad night could just be a case of getting your medications mixed up. Two bad nights means it's time to take your pencil away. At the very least, McNair, you should replace the last four letters of your name with "Donald," because you, sir, are a clown.

Disconnected-From-Reality Reaction of the Year: It's tempting to go with Ricky Hatton's fans, who kept singing like a band of lunatics even after their fighter got knocked out, or to go with Vic Darchinyan, who didn't even realize that Nonito Donaire had knocked him out, but in the end, **Acelino Freitas** wins by a margin wider than a Ricardo Mayorga left hook. Normally, after you quit on your stool, you shake your head from side to side in disappointment, maybe turn to the fans and shrug your shoulders, maybe go raise your opponent's arm. What you don't do is parade around the ring on the shoulders of your cornermen banging your fist against your heart. That's like Bill Buckner doing cartwheels in the infield then thrusting his glove triumphantly in the air at the end of Game Six. Hey, fighters quit sometimes. It happens. But it's not something to pat yourself on the back over.

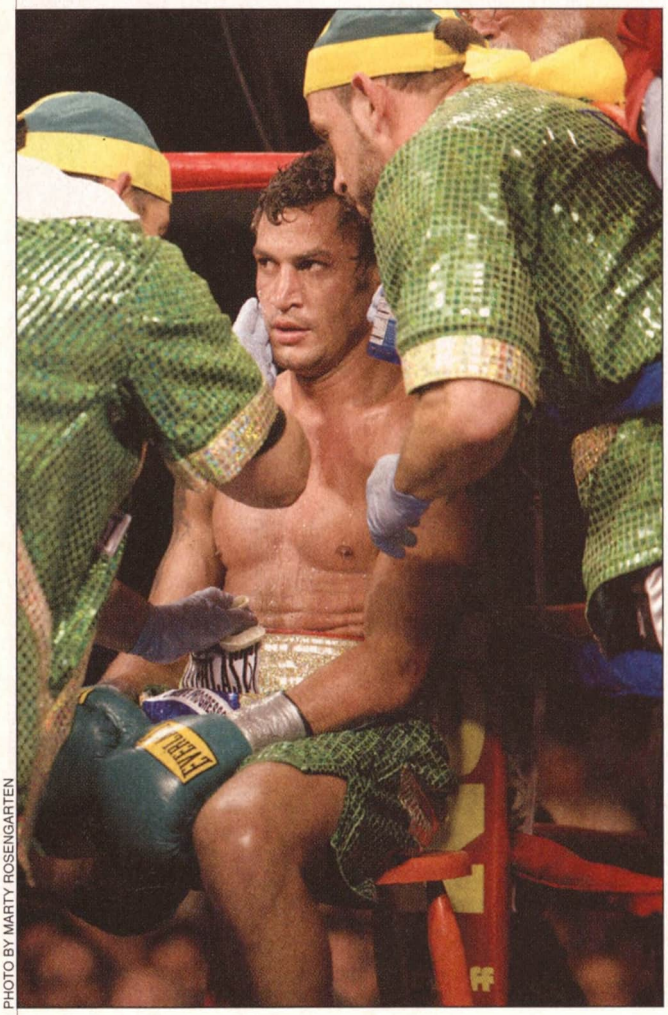


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Freitas contemplates his post-surrender party

Living-Down-To-Its-Initials Boxing Program of the Year: Remember when ***Boxing After Dark*** was the ultimate excuse to stay up late on a Saturday night? It was B.A.D. in the good way, the way that works with the suffix "-ass." Now it's just plain B.A.D. The way that has no suffix. The way that makes you actually flip channels to the train wreck that is *Saturday Night Live*. The show used to be about pairing exciting, up-and-coming fighters, showing saline-injected broads balancing in high heels while holding round cards, and Jim Lampley and Larry Merchant doing *Championship Boxing*-level commentary in less expensive clothes. But in recent years, *B.A.D.* has completely lost its way. Round-card girls only get shown if they're wearing burkas, we get the commentary B-team of Bob Papa, Max Kellerman, and Lennox Lewis (two ESPN2 guys and a guy who hasn't been interesting with a microphone in his hand since he battled Merchant for control of one after his fight with Vitali Klitschko), and in '07 we hit a new low with the pairing of boring 36-year-olds Vernon Forrest and Carlos Baldomir. Anyone else notice that Lou DiBella doesn't go around bragging about creating *Boxing After Dark* much anymore?

Unhealthy Former Soviet Union Heavyweight of the Year: You might think it would be Oleg Maskaev, the alphabet titlist who fought, *ummm*, zero times in '07. Or perhaps Vitali Klitschko, who tried to make a comeback but fought, *ummm*, zero times in '07. Or maybe Ruslan Chagaev, who pulled out of his fight with Sultan Ibragimov because of the ever-popular "undisclosed illness." But it's none of those people. You may not realize this, but the surname Bagg was shortened from Baggaev when yours truly's grandparents emigrated to America. And considering the Bagg-o-lard is about 60 pounds above the cruiserweight limit and considers the four food groups to be Twinkies, Whoppers with cheese, pork rinds, and vodka, you won't find a more unhealthy former Soviet Union heavyweight than good ol' **Jim Baggaev**. Sorry, Oleg, Vitali, and Ruslan—better luck next year.

Bagg Fires Back

The Baggareeno got a little surprise in the February issue when he saw that fellow columnist Ivan Goldman, who's always been perfectly happy to dish it out, demonstrated he couldn't take it so well after his new colleague told him he couldn't carry the Baggnificent One's jockstrap.

Jeez, the Bagglesworth had no idea someone would get so bent out of shape about being told he couldn't carry the Baggometer's jockstrap. And because Bagglestiltskin doesn't

The Monthly Mailbagg

Last issue, the readers sucked up to the Baggorama shamelessly. This issue, the hate mail started flowing in. It's about damned time.

Bagg:

When I read your debut RING column, you struck me as being an obnoxious, egomaniacal jerk. Since then I have begun to wonder if you had adopted that persona in an attempt at humor. Note I say "attempt," because if you are trying to be funny, you aren't. I really don't think your humor (if that's what it is) works on the printed page. And if you are in fact an obnoxious, egomaniacal jerk, your jockstrap remark showed you have as much class as Larry Holmes did—none. At least Holmes had talent. The greatest boxing writer? All-time, A.J. Liebling, hands down. Everybody else is second. You come third.

Marc Goodstein
Los Angeles, CA

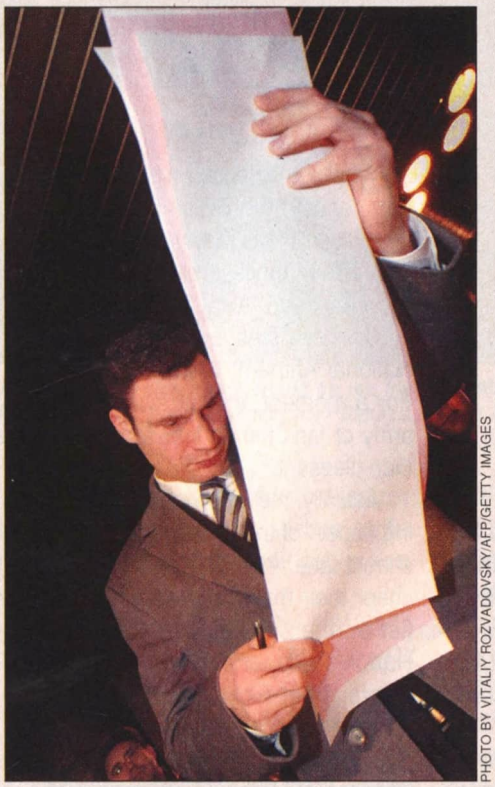


PHOTO BY VITALIY ROZVADOVSKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Vitali examines his ever-growing list of injuries

to say that, yes, Vitali has had some serious bad luck in the last three years. The thing is, though, he still will beat everyone in the division, including his brother if they would ever fight. Vitali Klitschko has nothing to prove to anyone, Jim, and if Holyfield can fight to 46, then Vitali should be able to go after his dream to be the first brothers to be champions at the same time. Vitali Klitschko is a class act and that is why the WBC made him a mandatory challenger if he came back, because they knew if he did he would be the number-one moneymaker in the heavyweight division. The reason people want to see Vitali and Peter is they want to see the best against the best. So get off Vitali, Jim, and watch him shock you by ruling the division again.

Mike Susits

Marc:

What is it with you Los Angelinos throwing hissy fits over my "jockstrap" comment? Can't disagree with you about Liebling—he's at least the "1a" to the Baggthalmologist's "1." As for the Baggylama being obnoxious and egomaniacal, don't be ridiculous. You just feel that way because you have an inferiority complex.

Dear Jim,

Your article in the February 2008 RING magazine had me furious. I'm a huge Vitali Klitschko fan and you basically dogged him through the whole article. Who are you to tell someone to give up on their dream? I would have

Mike,

The Baggarooney must apologize. How dare he jump to the conclusion that a fighter who has been injured in five consecutive training camps ought to be having second thoughts? Evander Holyfield is still fighting at 45 (you were only off by one year, which counts as getting the facts straight for you), and wouldn't it be wonderful if Vitali were to follow the same path, absorbing punishment pursuing an unattainable dream a decade past the end of his prime? Hey, we all want to see the best against the best. What we don't want to see is the best against TBA because Klitschko pulled out on fight week with yet another injury.

want to create any uncomfortable columnist-to-columnist tension, he'll gladly take the statement back.

Ivan, you can carry the Baggman's jockstrap anytime you want.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

Lucian Gonzalez, who is one of the best young .500 fighters in the world, and won't be .500 for long. The 24-year-old Puerto Rican was 2-4 when he came to the United States this past spring, and after spending a month on the streets homeless, he entered Kings Gym in Reading, Pennsylvania, hooked up with Marshall Kauffman and Joe Pastore, and quickly rattled off two wins to bring his record to 4-4. The latest came on November 15 against 4-0-1 Danny McDermott, who fully expected to stay unbeaten against the sub-.500 fighter in front of him, but got dropped in the first round, quickly realized Gonzalez was a lot better than his record suggested, and went on to drop a unanimous decision.

Gonzalez isn't the classic Stingray winner, considering he's more prospect than journeyman. But as long as you have more losses than wins, you're eligible for a Stingray. And the way things are looking, Gonzalez isn't ever going to be eligible for a Stingray again. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com.

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Brits Have It Right

What an incredible night of boxing in Las Vegas! As a British fight fan, I want to applaud Floyd Mayweather for a flawless performance and Ricky Hatton for his great heart. Also, I want to apologize to American fans for the booing of your National Anthem, which was shameful. For a moment, the passion of Hatton's army of fans turned into something less than pleasant.

Actually, the fans were the most striking aspect of the occasion, and America should take note. The Brits continued to cheer their man on even when he was flat on the canvas, and it's clear that Hatton's supporters aren't going anywhere. I bet Floyd, probably the best boxer of his era, unbeaten in five weight divisions, feels that there's no justice. On websites, his fellow countrymen continue to doubt his ability and criticize him mercilessly. I can't count the number of times I've read American fans commenting that Mayweather needs to fight a particular opponent in order to prove himself.

The day after the fight, despite his defeat, Hatton finished third in a huge poll of British sports fans for the BBC Sports Personality of the Year, a very prestigious title in the British sporting calendar. Enzo Calzaghe won an award for Coach of the Year, beating a well-respected soccer coach. And, of course, the winner of the annual award was Joe Calzaghe, who people are starting to recognize may be Britain's best ever boxer.

British boxing is in tremendous health. The sport needs a similarly robust American fanbase if it is to have a secure future. So go on, America, celebrate Floyd Mayweather before he gets fed up and walks away from boxing for good!

ANDREW FROLISH
Layham, U.K.

The Cortez Effect

What was up with Joe Cortez' refereeing of the Floyd Mayweather-Ricky Hatton fight? As a fan of this great sport, I was fuming and almost livid at what I watched. Why would the people who put together this potentially all-time great matchup place a referee in the ring who is obviously going to slow the fight down and interfere with the excitement and explosiveness it promised?

Joe Cortez did not let Ricky Hatton fight his own fight in the first few rounds. That was clear. Those first few rounds were Ricky Hatton's best chance at really stunning Mayweather and Cortez seemed to do nothing but stunt Ricky's chances at success by continuously breaking these guys apart for fear that something "bad" might happen.

I want something bad to happen when I watch a fight. Bad often means good when two guys are duking it out in a high-octane thriller. Hatton was all over

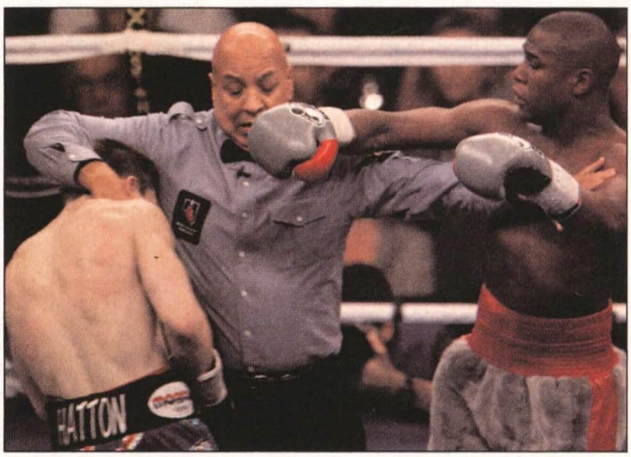


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Joe Cortez was too involved in the Mayweather-Hatton fight for reader Marcus Walsh's taste. He felt that the referee's heavy-handedness detracted from a good brawl and took away any chance the challenger had.

Mayweather, especially in the first four rounds, and could have done some serious damage to Mayweather's chances of winning, and perhaps even have given Mayweather a beating.

Absolutely it's a referee's place to step in if one of the fighters hits his opponent repeatedly to the back of the head. And please step in if a clinch is going to result in a broken arm for one of the fighters. However, please do not stop the action over and over again to warn the fighters not to get too rough in there. It's like he was warning them not to fight too hard.

Let them beat the stuffing out of each other. Let them rough it up. Let the fighters do the fighting. That's the fight I wanted to see.

MARCUS WALSH
Kingston, Ontario

A Chip Off The Old Enemy

I know this would tick off his father, but does Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. look and fight like Oscar De La Hoya? I've been watching him for a while and nobody has pointed this out yet. I can't hold my tongue any longer.

FINLEY TEAL
finteal@yahoo.com

What Round Is It?

I have met and talked with Shane Mosley's father, Jack, who is one of the nicest men you could meet in the fight game. But after watching the Miguel Cotto-Shane Mosley fight, I was shocked at how ineffective he was as a trainer and corner man. Jack couldn't recall what round it was and provided no useful advice during the round breaks. A fighter of Sugar Shane's caliber and experience doesn't have to be reminded to "keep punching," but I'm sure he would appreciate being told what round he was heading into.

There are different roles in the corner. For example, Lou Duva was short on boxing strategy but a master motivator and cheerleader. Emanuel Steward is a great strategist who picks up on what an opponent is doing and tells his fighter how to adjust.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Juan Diaz' non-stop attack would be too much for Manny Pacquiao, just as it was against Acelino Freitas, predicts reader Alex Daneau. Alex is looking for Diaz to crack the pound-for-pound list very soon.

Jack Mosley is neither motivator nor strategist and should stick to working the pads and providing his son water between rounds.

BUDA DEVENS
Honolulu, HI

Pacquiao-Guzman, Please

I wonder what Joan Guzman has to do to secure a big fight against Manny Pacquiao. The Dominican has triumphed in amazing fashion against top competitors such as Jorge Barrios and Humberto Soto. There's no better fight out there at 130 pounds than The Guz vs. The Pac. Hopefully, we'll see it in 2008.

MANUEL MOTA
manuelmotah@hotmail.com

Sugar Ray Still Champ

I admire Sugar Ray Leonard's work in *The Contender* series. He gives these young men a chance and the incentive to become serious contenders. Leonard was a champion in the ring and he's still a champion in boxing.

RICHARD PRINCE
Gorham, NH

Dynamo Diaz

I have never before seen a guy who fights with Juan Diaz' relentless stamina. He is going to pop up on the pound-for-pound list very soon. I also think that if he fights Manny Pacquiao, Diaz' technique, unbelievable stamina, and his surprisingly sturdy chin is going to drown the Filipino tornado in a torrent of non-stop punches.

ALEX DANEAU
Montreal, Quebec

Welter Wonderland

I would like to express my gratitude to Gavin Evans for his article on "The 20 Greatest Welterweights Of All-Time" (THE RING, February 2008). It was a delightful read and also very informative. I certainly would enjoy reading more of the same in different weight divisions.

JOHN KUZYK
Levittown, NY

Why Does Marquez Rate?

May I ask why Juan Manuel Marquez is on your pound-for-pound list when he was beaten by Chris John (who remains unbeaten)?

SUNIT BAGREE
sunitbagree@hotmail.com

Editor's note: Keep in mind that our pound-for-pound list is based entirely on opinion, unlike divisional rankings, which are based on results within a given weight class. Marquez is on the P-4-P list based on the success he has had against elite fighters, including Manny Pacquiao and Marco Antonio Barrera. Marquez' fight with Chris John, incidentally, was closer than the officials' scores indicate. ■

By Eric Raskin

Champ vs. Champ, U.S. vs. U.K., Part II

Everybody knows by now about the nose-to-nose confrontations shared by **Bernard Hopkins** and **Joe Calzaghe** in Las Vegas prior to the **Floyd Mayweather-Ricky Hatton** fight. But what everybody might not realize is the extent to which the outcome of the welterweight championship fight that weekend motivated Calzaghe to do what it takes to get a fight with Hopkins signed.

"It's the fight I'm after, 100 percent," Calzaghe told THE RING in late-December. "Watching Hatton-Mayweather, it excited me about the possibility of fighting in the States and getting revenge for the Brits."

In a 14-year, 44-fight pro career, Calzaghe, born in England and raised in Wales, has yet to come to America for a fight. (In fact, aside from one fight in Denmark and one in Germany, all of his fights have taken place in the U.K.) But it seems that's finally about to change. As of press time, the world light heavyweight champion and the world super middleweight champion were inching closer to making the fight a reality, with April 12 developing as the likely date and Las Vegas being the probable host city.

"I believe it's going to happen, and I definitely believe he wants the fight just like I do, because where else is he going to go? **Roy Jones** again? That's a joke. Hopkins has been a great fighter for years, and he knows that if he wants a fight that tests his greatness, it's against me."

Weight is an interesting element of this bout, as Hopkins is technically a division above Calzaghe, but "The Executioner" was a middleweight only two years ago, and he weighed in at 170 pounds for his most recent fight. Calzaghe, meanwhile, has been struggling to make 168 for years. So after spending some quality time just inches away from each other, who does Calzaghe think is actually the bigger man?

"We're probably the same height," he said, "but he's quite meaty, I think he's got some weight to come off before the fight. Honestly, though, size isn't going to be a factor in this fight. The big difference is my hand speed. I don't care what weight we fight at; I believe I'll beat him at any weight."

If so, that would mean Hopkins will be losing to a "white boy," something he said—to great backlash—would never happen. While some were up in arms over B-Hop's racial remark, don't count Calzaghe among the offended.

"I don't take it too seriously. I thought it was quite amusing, to be honest," the Welshman said. "He can be the bad boy in the run-up to the fight if he wants to, he can be the trash-talker. But it takes a lot to get under my skin. This will only serve to make it that much sweeter when I beat him."

Listen Up

Undefeated light heavyweight **Chad Dawson** is set to return to action as the headliner on Showtime's April 5 card, and while we know the opponent can't be more overmatched than his last two (**Jesus "Chuy" Ruiz** and **Epifanio Mendoza**), we don't actually know yet who the opponent will be. The most likely candidate as of press time appeared to be **Glen Johnson**, which has the makings of an outstanding crossroads fight. By the way, following their first-Saturday-of-every-month policy, Showtime should theoretically be back with its next *Championship Boxing* show on May 3, but early indications are that they'll go dark on that date if they have to compete with an **Oscar De La Hoya** fight ... Those fans hoping to see **Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.** and **Alfonso Gomez** square off on HBO in '08 are going to have to put those hopes on hold, as Chavez promoter **Bob Arum** was delighted that Chavez vs. **Ray Sanchez III** drew about 70,000 pay-per-view buys and wants to keep milking this cash generator on small PPVs. The plan is to stage about a half-dozen such shows centered around Chavez this year before stepping up to more dangerous opponents like *Contender* star Gomez in '09. ■

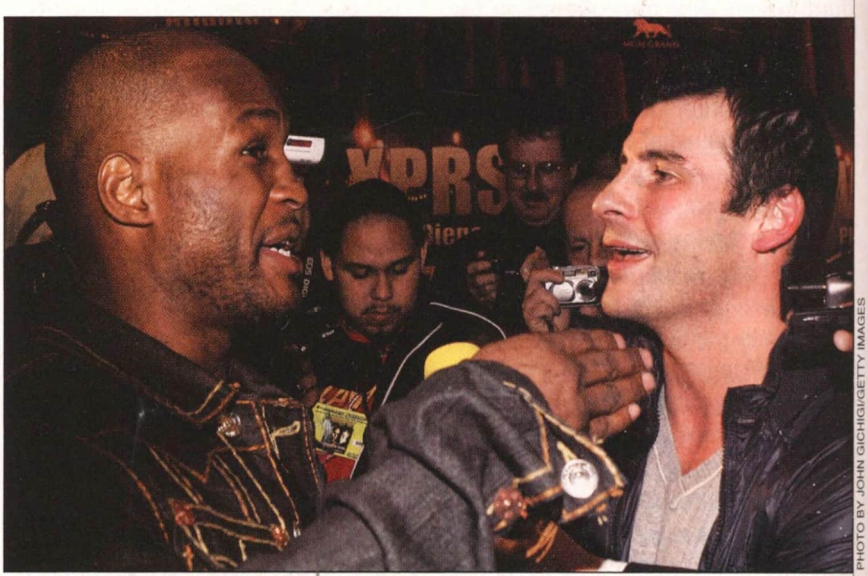


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Hopkins confronts Calzaghe at Mayweather-Hatton weigh-in

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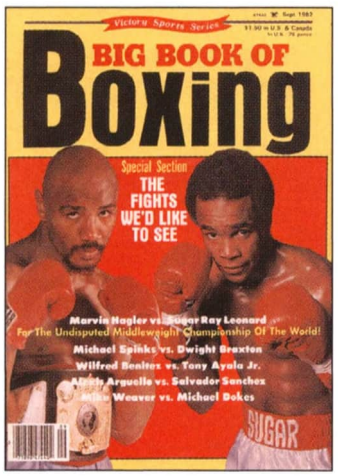

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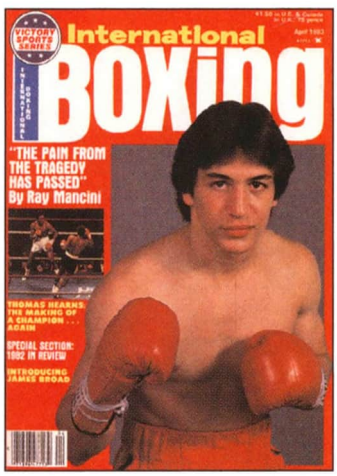

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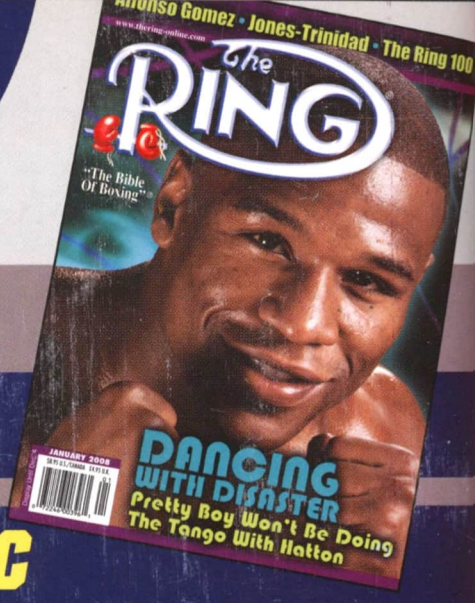

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